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the 1990s, the incidence of *S. flexneri* has increased in the United Kingdom [10]. In the United States, *S. flexneri* has been reported to be the most common serotype of *Shigella* isolated from children with shigellosis [11].

There is a paucity of data on the epidemiology of *S. flexneri* in the United Kingdom. In the 1970s, *S. flexneri* was the most common serotype of *Shigella* isolated from children with shigellosis in the United Kingdom [12]. In the 1980s, *S. flexneri* was the most common serotype of *Shigella* isolated from children with shigellosis in the United Kingdom [13].

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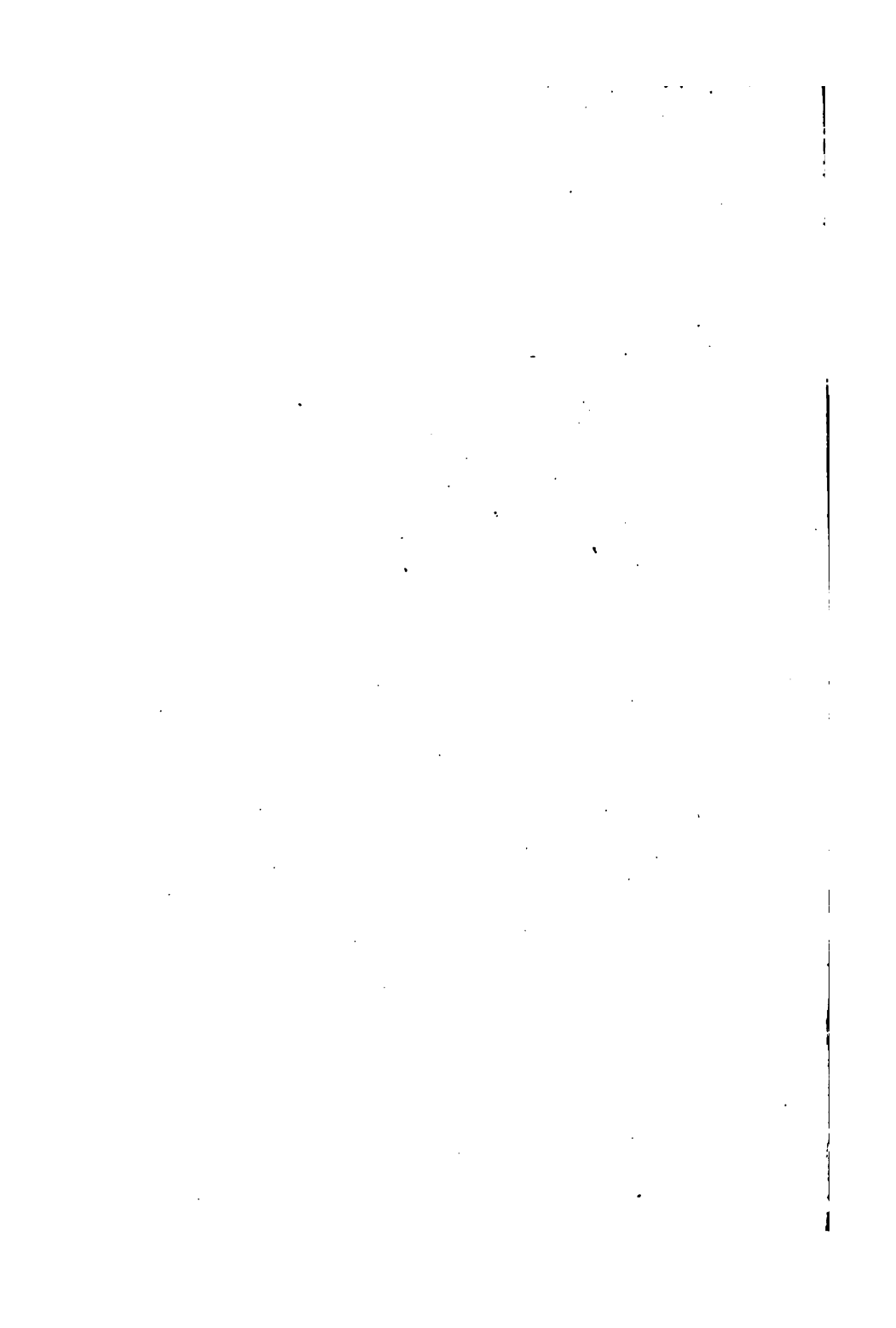
In the 1990s, *S. flexneri* was the most common serotype of *Shigella* isolated from children with shigellosis in the United Kingdom [18]. In the 1990s, *S. flexneri* was the most common serotype of *Shigella* isolated from children with shigellosis in the United Kingdom [19].

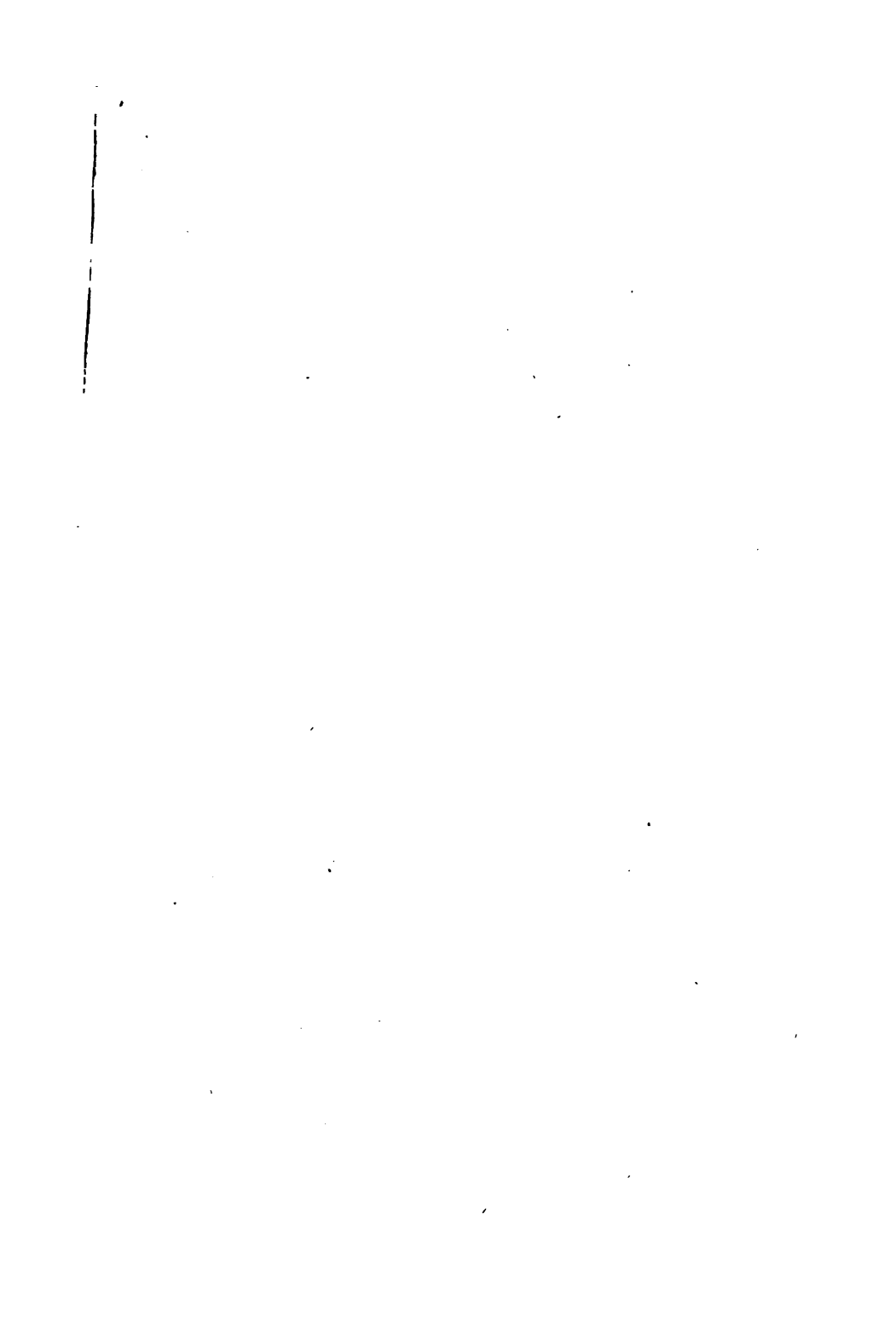
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# A TRAGEDY INDEED.

A *Probel*,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

*Translated from the French of Adolphe Belot.*

BY

H. MAINWARING PUNSTAN.

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VOL. II.

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London:

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# A TRAGEDY INDEED.

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## PART I.—*Continued.*

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### CHAPTER XVIII.

VIBERT undoubtedly aimed too high. Instead of intriguing for the honour of entering the police force he should have simply come out as a dramatic author, and in that modest career he would have gained an unquestioned success. He would have been especially excellent in the construction of a piece and in devising what are called "situations," whilst in arranging the *mise en scène* he would have been without a rival.

He wanted Savari, the hero of his drama, to betray and unmask himself, and he imagined that in putting in his hands the instrument which had been employed in the commission of his crime he had found the means to bring about that end.

It was the crowning situation, to be awaited with impatience, and on it would follow the *dénouement*.

How cleverly he had led up to it! With what art he had arranged it! This situation might have been brought about at any moment from the opening of the play, but then it would have been wanting in scenic effect.

Savari, on his guard since his arrest; Savari, distrusting everybody and everything, would have taken the dagger in his hand without flinching, would have examined it, poised it, and returned it quietly to its owner.

Vibert had allowed several months to elapse. By his intelligence and his craftiness he had inspired Savari with a certain amount of confi-

dence ; by kind words and acts he had softened his naturally difficult character, and by the serious love in which he had skilfully entangled him, he had succeeded in mollifying and quelling his energetic nature.

See, too, how well he had chosen the site of the scene—the Café Anglais—the very place where Albert Savari had dined an hour before the assassination of Maurice Vidal took place. If he had done the deed, would he not experience some agitation at thus finding himself in the place where he must undoubtedly, in that case, have thought out and arranged his crime ?

How propitious, too, was the moment chosen for this decisive trial ! Savari had seen Julia during the day ; for the first time he had spoken to her of love ; he had opened his heart to her ; he had pleaded, he had wept, he had suffered. His over-excited nerves were relaxed, his mental force less active, and he found himself, by a sort of fatality, in a state

both morally and physically incapable of originating anything, but peculiarly accessible to influences and impressions of all kinds.

At half-past six Vibert entered the Café Anglais, and was at once shown into a room engaged by him on the previous evening and known to the fashionable world as "*le Grand Seize*."

Whilst awaiting the arrival of his guests he made some important preparations. By his orders, bouquets of flowers, bought by him on account of their exhaling the most powerful perfumes, were placed on the table. Vibert, who had studied everything, was a thorough believer in the action of flowers on the nervous system. He also was very particular in ordering the wines, asking for heady, but not exciting kinds.

Finally, he directed that double the usual number of candles should be lighted, and took especial care that the seat to be occupied by Savari should be in the full glare of all this illumination.

At seven o'clock Madame Vidal, Savari, and

Vibert met and sat down to dinner. The conversation languished at first, and it could not well be otherwise, seeing that each of the guests carried a heavy burden of engrossing thoughts.

But very soon Vibert, more master of himself than the others were, drove away all ideas which might have endangered the important end he had in view, and brought the conversation into a channel in accordance with his plan.

During the first course it was trifling, varied and almost gay, entering later on into a melancholy phase. At dessert it touched on serious topics and relapsed into moral and philosophical arguments.

Vibert, in order to rise to the level of the occasion, had summoned to his assistance his own reminiscences, his earliest religious studies, the more or less paradoxical theories evolved by his protector, the Marquis de X——, and all the experience he had acquired in the Police Office, where the majority of social evils and



moral infirmities had bit by bit unfolded themselves before him. He enunciated certain new ideas, which he was reputed to have brought from Italy, on prison organisation, the solitary system, and hard labour.

From things he passed on to persons, and entertained Savari with accounts of some celebrated criminals, French and foreign, whose trials had interested him. He manifested a wish to be present during the sitting of an assize court, and asked if there was any interesting case likely to come on soon.

"You cannot imagine," he said, turning to his guests with an open-hearted manner, "how curious I have always been on these subjects. I have read the greater part of the celebrated trials in various countries, and all the official reports published with regard to them."

Then, suddenly addressing Savari, he added, "Do you know why I have always been drawn towards you?"

"I have not the least idea."

"It is fantastic, ridiculous, I admit, and you will not bear me any good-will for it."

"At all events, I promise you I will bear you no ill-will."

"Well, my dear fellow, your name was familiar to me and seemed to come pleasantly from my lips. It differs only in the mode of spelling it from the name of one of the most distinguished Ministers of Police, René Savary, Duke de Rovigo, whose interesting memoirs I recently read with avidity. I am an original, but what of that? People please me on slight grounds."

"So much the better for me, for I have no grounds but slight ones."

"Indeed you have, and I discovered them later on; but in the first instance it was your name that won me over."

"And it never did me a greater service," said Savari graciously.

Vibert bowed, and continued, with his usual volubility—

"Ah! the police, trials, and assassinations—

they are my *forte*. Not that I am telling you any news, for ever since I knew you have I not been asking you daily to gain admittance for me to your prisons and your Palais-de-Justice? By-the-by, I must tell you that I have not waited for you because you did not appear to be greatly interested in the matter. So I went this morning, before breakfast, and paid a round of visits of this description."

"Of what description?"

"The Conciergerie, Sainte-Chapelle, and the Palais-de-Justice. I could not contain myself any longer, my worthy guide, and I followed my bent without you."

"Well, what did you see?"

"Everything, absolutely everything. I took a guide, a brave old man about fifty years old, covered with medals, and an excellent one he was. Yes, I alighted from my cab outside the Conciergerie, and was gazing with wonderment at its huge towers, when my guide caught sight of me, and no doubt, said to himself—  
'Here is a stranger, a sight-seer, a fool—I'll take

charge of him, show him about, and then fleece him.' He came to me and offered his services, which I accepted eagerly, and as he was well known in the place, he showed me over pretty nearly everywhere. I saw the hall of the Pas-Perdus, one of the Chambers of the Correctional Police, the Assize Courts, and the tower in which Marie-Antoinette was confined—it was curious—very curious. I was so thoroughly satisfied that I did not wish to dispense with my guide, and I hoped he, on his part, would stick to me. I owe a famous acquisition to him, too!"

"A famous acquisition!" said Savari, who, with Madame Vidal's permission, was lighting a cigarette.

"Yes, a famous acquisition," replied Vibert. "You shall see. Always accompanied by my guide, I went upstairs one minute, down the next, traversed passages, and, in short, I was overrunning the whole of the Palais-de-Justice when I all once came upon a half-open door.

"Where does this door lead to?' I asked.

“‘To a room belonging to the registry.’

“‘And what is in it?’

“‘Heaps of papers, portfolios of all sorts, and particularly what are called in Paris *pièces de conviction*, that is to say, all the miscellaneous articles that are produced on the various trials; the weapon used by a criminal, the hat he lost in his flight, the blood-stained handkerchief found upon him; in several instances the clothes of the victim, the watch which was stolen—in a word, all the different objects which have assisted judges and juries in bringing a case home. Whilst the trial is going on, and according to the necessities of the case, these different objects are removed from the registry to the Correctional Tribune or the Assize Court, as the case may be.’

“‘But,’ I asked, still impelled by my desire for knowledge, ‘when the case is over and the matter at an end, what becomes of all these things?’

“‘Some, under the authority of the Public Prosecutor, are restored to the owners or their

friends, others are sold. You can well understand, sir,' added my guide, 'that even the Palais-de-Justice would not be large enough to contain all the objects of this sort, accumulating year by year.'

" 'And when do the sales of which you speak take place?' I asked, with interest.

" 'At certain dates fixed in advance. There is one going on now.'

" 'Where?'

" 'Close to this place.'

" 'Indeed! I am curious to see that. I shall buy something, perhaps, which has belonged to a great criminal.'

" 'Nothing easier, sir, if you will have the goodness to follow me.'

" I did not say a word more, but followed my guide, and a quarter-of-an-hour later I was the possessor of a most curious relic, I assure you."

" A stolen jewel? " asked Savari, between the whiffs of his cigarette.

" Oh! better than that."

" An article of clothing which belonged to

some wretched man who has found his way to the hulks, or the scaffold?"

"Not a bit of it. I worship curiosities, but at the same time I like them to be of some use, or, at all events, to be free from everything repulsive or disgusting. An Englishman is not so particular. He gives rolls of bank notes for the old end of a cigar which has been between illustrious lips. But I am not English, not I—I know how to mingle the useful with the agreeable, *utile dulci*, as the poet has it. But, see."

And abruptly, without further preparation, he handed to Savari the dagger which until then he had kept under the table, and which he had opened, whilst he was speaking, without any one having noticed him.

Julia, pale and trembling, leaning half over the table, looked on.

Vibert, in handing the dagger, had risen. His two hands rested on the back of a chair, and from behind his blue glasses he looked on, too. But he looked on coolly, ready to seize

on the least change of countenance on the part of his adversary. For the moment he forbade his heart to beat, and it stopped.

The waiters had cleared the table, and left the room.

No sound was heard but the dull rumbling of the carriages on the Boulevard.

At last, then, the truth would perhaps come out—

If Savari were the murderer, it appeared impossible, considering the surroundings of the scene, cleverly prepared as they were, that he could avoid betraying himself by a start, an exclamation, or a shudder, at the sight of the weapon which would recall his crime to his remembrance in the most vivid and matter-of-fact manner.

Savari, at first, showed a certain unwillingness to touch the dagger held out to him, but, after having at length taken and carefully examined it, he replaced it on the table, with the remark—

“I should not advise you, if you are ever



attacked, to make use of this weapon. It is in a shocking bad state."

Vibert was confounded.

All his calculations were upset, his plans overthrown. He was at the expense of the dinner at the Café Anglais and the *mise en scène*. For three months he had been losing his time and working at a dead loss ; he had been hunting on a false scent. Truly in that there was enough to drive him to despair.

Whilst giving way to these reflections, it occurred to him to discover the impression made upon Julia. He went back to her side, whilst Savari, without troubling himself any more about the dagger on the table, had risen and was lighting a second cigarette at one of the candles placed on the piano.

Julia had not changed her attitude ; only she was not quite so pale, and a sad smile passed over her lips. One would have said that she was indifferent to the futile result which had been obtained.

This was too much for the irascible Vibert.

What ! whilst he was in despair, his companion, his accomplice, she who was even more interested than he in the success of the experiment, did not despair with him ! He was defeated, and, to look at her, one might believe that instead of lamenting his failure, she was rejoicing over it. Such a piece of injustice revolted him, but far from disheartening him, she inspired him with a sudden desire for revenge.

“The game is not lost yet,” he said to himself ; “the experiment that I have just tried was incomplete. It is possible that in a moment of fury and exasperation, a murderer would make use of the first weapon he could lay his hands on, without even looking at it, and that consequently he would have no recollection of it. I must complete the experiment.”

He rejoined Savari, talked to him for a few moments on indifferent subjects, took his arm, and walked up and down the room, bringing him nearer and nearer, by degrees, to the table and the place he had previously left.

"So," he said, at length, sitting down at his side, and pointing to the dagger on the table, "this weapon, which I was fortunate enough to buy, will not, according to you, be of any use."

"I do not think so; the point is so blunt. Look at it yourself."

"So it is," said Vibert, appearing to scrutinize it closely. "Then, that fully explains how the point, in penetrating the body of the victim, must have struck some part—"

"What!" asked Savari, quickly. "Was somebody actually struck by this weapon?"

"Yes, and the blow was mortal."

"Who told you that?"

"My guide, of course. Do you think I buy things of this sort without collecting every particle of information as to their origin and history? This dagger has a history, and I have it at my finger's end. It was the property of a young man, who was assassinated in the month of October last, in Paris, at No. 6, Rue de la Paix."

Savari started.

Vibert continued—

“This young man was called—wait a moment—I shall remember the name directly—he was called—”

“Maurice Vidal,” said Savari.

It was Vibert’s turn now to start in surprise.

“You know of this affair?” he asked.

“I was directly mixed up in it,” said Savari.

“How?”

“I was accused of being the assassin of Maurice Vidal.”

“You!”

“Yes, I! So when you spoke to me so abruptly of this crime, my emotion was extreme. The very memory of it distresses me, and I have every reason to turn as pale as death. Have the kindness to pass me the water bottle.”

Vibert complied.

Savari drank a mouthful of water, and resumed—

“If you only knew the misery and annoy-

ance I suffered from that affair ! Would you believe that I was arrested, thrown into prison—?”

“Impossible,” said Vibert.

“Alas ! It is only too true. I had to appear before a magistrate ; I was in solitary confinement. I even had the handcuffs on, according to the custom of the police in France. Yes, it is of no use being calm and going where you are told ; the handcuffs are put on all the same. It is a precautionary measure.”

Then turning towards Julia, he continued—

“Pardon my emotion. I know it is not quite the thing at the end of a dinner party, and in the presence of a lady, but when I think of all my sufferings I am no longer master of myself.”

“If I had suspected for a moment,” said Vibert, “believe me, my dear sir—”

He stopped in the full swing of his excuses, and said with a perfectly natural air—

“May we know how you got out of all this difficulty ?”

“ By proving in the clearest manner possible that I could not have been the culprit.”

“ But how came the idea of suspecting you into any magistrate’s head ? ”

“ Simply because I had been in constant communication with Maurice Vidal up to two days before his death.”

“ By heaven, this is too dreadful,” cried Vibert, “ I suppose that if you were to be assassinated to-night, I should be suspected of the crime because I had spent the evening with you.”

“ Certainly you would stand a good chance of being arrested if nobody had discovered the real culprit. I advise you to be on your guard,” added Savari, whose colour was returning.

“ Justice is rather eccentric,” remarked the detective.

“ Not so much so as you might imagine ; after all, she does her duty, and you see that she loses no time in releasing those who are innocent. But, all the same, I have suffered

terribly, and you have this evening re-opened a wound which was barely healed."

For the last few minutes he had been speaking calmly, without excess of any kind, and in a measured tone. A sort of melancholy appeared to be diffused over him, and there were tears in his voice. All at once he reached across the table, seized the dagger in his hands, and after a long and silent examination of it, he said—

"And it was with this that you were killed, poor Maurice Vidal! You were no friend of mine, and I had with you some unpleasant discussions in my own interest. Yes, you, the upright man *par excellence*, the man successful by sheer force of toil, energy, and honesty, you would not set yourself to understand the difficulties of my life, the obstacles, both social and innate in myself, which stood in the way of my being what you were. You were ever stern, harsh, unjust perhaps, to me. I have no grudge against you for that, Maurice Vidal. I lament you with all my heart, I weep for you

with all my soul. You had youth, wealth, and strength, and one second of time, one blow with this thing that does not even resemble a weapon, sufficed to rob you of all !”

He hesitated for a moment, and then, without looking at Julia, Savari resumed—

“ Ah ! if the man who killed you had been aware of certain details of your life, as I knew them after this lamentable event had taken place, if he had known that you loved and were beloved, and that you were expecting on the morrow the companion of your heart, then perhaps his hand would have trembled, and the fatal blow would not have been struck. Poor fellow ! Poor woman ! ”

Savari was silent, and heavy tears coursed down his cheeks. At the same moment Julia, whose courage had up to this time sustained her, but who was shaken by all that she had gone through during the day, broke into a passion of sobs just as the last words fell from the lips of Savari.

Vibert's first impulse was to rush to her,



but, remembering that this sudden outburst of grief required explanation, he turned towards Savari, and said with an air of annoyance—

“ This, too, is all our fault; we have been too dramatic. For the last hour we have done nothing but talk of murder and assassination. You have been lamenting it, I was stupid enough to be engrossed by it, and she—she is possessed of nerves, and I must say one ought not to be without them.”

Savari did not utter a syllable, but watched Julia's tears without going near her.

“ Come,” said Vibert, desirous of putting an end to this scene, “ what we had better do now is to separate, and come to a mutual understanding to be more lively in future.”

He rang, ordered a cab and took Madame Vidal home, Savari meanwhile going his own way.

In Julia's present state Vibert was unwilling to come to any explanation with her, so he confided her to Marietta's care, and left.

What explanation, in fact, was there to have ?

What fresh proof did he possess of Savari's guilt? He had anticipated producing a great effect; that effect had been produced and had exceeded his expectation. Savari did not confine himself to turning pale and trembling. He had given way to tears, and had exhibited every indication of a real, lively emotion. But this emotion admitted of a very easy explanation, and Vibert was caught in his own trap. He had contrived for his own pleasure an admirable *mise en scène*, he had brought about an excess of feeling on the part of his adversary, had softened his heart, and disposed him to sentimentality. What more natural than that Savari should break down over the recollection of an affair in which he had found himself so directly concerned, and from which he had suffered so cruelly? His paleness, his tears, his emotion, were no evidences of guilt; they merely testified to the fact that the suspicions which were rife against him, his arrest, and the hours he had passed in prison, had inflicted on his heart a wound which still bled. In wishing

to confound Savari, Vibert had given him an opportunity of appearing in the most favourable light possible. This man, who had hitherto been credited with being trivial, common place, and even incapable of high sentiments, had suddenly shown himself serious, impressionable, and reflecting. He was moved at the death of Maurice Vidal, he had eulogised him who at one time had been his enemy, he had paid a tribute to his memory, and had mingled his tears with those of Julia Vidal.

In giving way to these various reflections, all tending to render him downcast, Vibert made his way to his rooms in the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, which he had not thought of giving up. He was not sorry to resume for a moment his old character, to lay aside the habiliments of the Count de Rubini, which had profited him so little, and to indulge in the reminiscences of a life which, if not merry, had been at least uniform and peaceful, and which was recalled to him by his little room on the fifth floor.

"Ah ! M. Vibert," said the porter, recognising him, "it is a long time since we set eyes on you—"

"I have been in the country. Has anything happened during my absence ?"

"Nothing, except that this letter has been left for you."

Vibert took the letter handed to him. It bore the stamp of the Commissioner of Police of the first arrondissement, Tuileries section, and was couched in the following terms—

"MY DEAR VIBERT,

"During the time you were employed in my office, you had under your consideration, in my absence, the case of an escaped convict, called Langlade, and a strapping red-haired girl, known under the nickname of Soleil-Couchant.

"Information, which you alone can give, is required at the Prefecture in connection with these two persons, and I should be obliged if you would come and see me as soon as possible

'in my office, so that I may be enabled, in concert with you, to draw up the required memorandum.

“X.”

“I will go to-morrow morning before returning to the Hotel des Princes,” said Vibert to himself, as he put the letter in his pocket and went upstairs.





## PART II.

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### CHAPTER I.

AFTER having passed the night following the dinner at the Café Anglais in his little room in the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, and after having on the morrow given the Commissioner of Police of the Tuileries section the required information with regard to Langlade and Soleil-Couchant, Vibert returned to his rooms at the Hotel des Princes.

He had been debating seriously within himself as to whether he had not better give up the game, write and tell the Magistrate that Savari was either innocent or too clever to furnish weapons against himself, pay a last

visit to Madame Vidal and express his regret that he was unable to serve her further, and, in short, resign his post as a detective police agent on extraordinary service.

Restrained by his *amour propre*, or by some feeling of a totally different nature, he did not give effect to these ideas, but resumed, for a time at least, the part of the Count de Rubini, which he had so wonderfully created and made his own.

The only difference consisted in his not playing it with the same perfection; he was, so to speak, merely a substitute for that personage. Carelessness in his dress, formerly attended to so scrupulously, might now be noticed; in speaking, he sometimes forgot that he was an Italian, and at times he appeared surprised when the waiters at the Hotel addressed him as Count.

Simultaneously with all this, his temper became unequal, his manner abrupt and hasty, and his mode of life decidedly irregular. He appeared to labour under some fixed idea which

occasionally, when he was pacing with long strides his sitting-room in the hotel, would force from himself senseless exclamations, fragments of sentences, or soliloquies, such as these—

“Fool!” he would say to himself, “you wanted to leave your peaceful office in the Rue Saint Honoré, to live, forsooth—well, you are living. What have you to complain about?”

“To suffer is to live! To live is to suffer. Ah! you have life enough, for you suffer much.”

He stopped for a moment, drew his hand across his forehead, and said—

“It is well done—I tell you it is well done. That will teach you; instead of remaining quietly in your hole, you wanted to have passions like the rest of the world; you gave your heart leave to beat—and it has profited by your permission, like the artful creature that it is— It beats, but to make up for not having beaten until to-day, it hammers away now with force enough to burst its fragile casing.”



He broke out into a laugh, and added—

“Well, and if it does burst, what then? No more anger, no more rage, no more envy, and no more suffering! A few feet of earth, a common grave, a wooden cross, perhaps, given by the Marquis de X——, and all is told! No,” he cried, savagely, “I will not die, I am not such a fool as to die of such things as these—I, Vibert, die because— Bah! this is too absurd— How the Marquis would laugh, and I, too, first of all, in my tomb underneath my little garden— No, on the contrary, I want to live, to live well, and indulge in every kind of folly. Folly, indeed—I’ll have enough of it. I will live in one year sufficiently to make up for all the time during which I have been only existing.”

He stopped short once more, and then resumed his monologue more calmly but with a sort of bitter sadness—

“I boast, but I could not live so. One cannot change one’s habits in a day. At thirty-five one cannot burn for pleasures yet untasted.

Besides, there are memories which cannot be effaced, thoughts not to be chased away at will, images whose place none others can fill— Ah! if I had a son," he continued, still harping on the same idea, "I would launch him at eighteen out into the world's ocean and the whirlpool of passion. Go, I would say to him, love, rejoice, suffer, expend your energies, wear your heart on your sleeve, let who will peck at it, drag it through every bramble on your road. So you will make it invulnerable and insensible, and when the strength of your manhood comes upon you, you will laugh instead of weeping, you will make others suffer, but escape suffering yourself."

He began to laugh—

"Make other people suffer, did I say? Vibert, my friend, you are mad. Your son would, no doubt, be like you, and no one built after your mould would make others suffer. Look at yourself! Here is a glass, take courage and contemplate the handsome image there reflected. With a figure such as that, with a

physique such as yours, a man may suffer, but he will not be the cause of suffering in others. Make up your mind, my fine fellow, and turn away your face quickly, lest you should be frightened at yourself."

Then, passing rapidly to a different train of thought, he said—

"Let me reflect; what am I doing here? Why am I not below there? I am a Government *employé*, after all; I draw my salary, but I am only playing at work—I am scribbling on the margin of my duty—I have a mission to fulfil, and I am not fulfilling it. I have got myself into an absurd fix where I said I was certain of success. Well, what about this success? I have thrown up my hand in the middle of the game, without finding out whether it is lost. It is not lost—the devil take it, it shall not be lost, and I will pick my cards up again."

Then, if he were in his rooms, he would go out at once; if he were already out he would hurry with rapid strides towards the Rue de

Grammont. But when he reached a certain door he would stop all of a heap and begin again one of his never-ending soliloquies.

“What is the use of going up? What shall I learn up there? Yes, he is at her side, by Heaven, I know it well. What can I do there? I must wait now; wait without showing myself or disturbing them. It is my only method of getting at the truth, my sole plank of safety—and it is but a shaky one—I suffer atrociously at being obliged to trust to it.”

One day, however, Vibert did not stop at Julia's door; he hurried past the porter, went up the servants' staircase, and did not come down for an hour afterwards.

Nevertheless, he was not shown in to Madame Vidal; Marietta did not hear him ring; nobody suspected his presence in the house. What became of him during all that time?

He in all probability did not learn anything to his satisfaction. Undoubtedly this mysterious visit was a source of great discouragement.

ment to him and made him thoroughly disgusted with life, for on the day after his visit to the Rue de Grammont he committed one of those terrible acts of imprudence which generally serve as a cloak to some unavowed idea of suicide.

Being summoned in the morning to the Prefecture of Police to recount the details of the affair entrusted to him, he was shown into the office of the chief of the detective force. Just as he entered, he overheard the following conversation between the chief and one of the *employés*—

“You place entire credit, therefore, in the information given by the woman.”

“Yes, sir; it is certainly her interest to speak the truth.”

“According to her, Langlade will sleep to-night in the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs?”

“It is more than probable.”

“Nothing, then, hinders you from arresting him to-morrow morning?”

“No, sir; none of my men will hesitate to

follow, but I must warn you that their lives will be in great danger. This Langlade has a terrible reputation. Twice he has escaped from the hulks at Toulon and Brest. He is gifted with enormous strength and never lies down without a pair of loaded pistols ready to his hand. The first man who enters his room is sure to be killed."

"Bah! that is, if he does not know his business," said Vibert, who was standing near the door.

The chief and the inspector turned round in astonishment.

"I should like to see you there," said the Inspector.

"That is easy enough. You have only to follow me if I am authorised to go to-morrow morning to the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs."

"Who are you?" said the chief, looking at him more attentively.

"I am called simply Vibert, sir, and you have summoned me in connection with the assassination in the Rue de la Paix."

"Ah! very good. I had almost given you up; we have not heard of you for some time. Well, what have you to tell me?"

"Nothing new, sir. I am still waiting, and very impatiently, I can assure you."

"Very well; we know your zeal, and we rely on you. Now, to return to Langlade—you offer to arrest him."

"Certainly."

"But," exclaimed the Inspector, "you do not know the man you have to deal with."

"There you are mistaken," replied Vibert. "Langlade has already passed through my hands, when I was secretary to the Commissioner of Police in the Rue St. Honoré. He was bold enough to come one morning, accompanied by his mistress, to ask me for a passport for England. His manner seemed to me suspicious, so I had him followed and arrested. After that he escaped a second time from the hulks, whither I was the cause of his retreating."

"Since you know him so well, I wonder he

does not frighten you more. You, doubtless, remember his gigantic size ? ”

“ Perfectly. I am a dwarf by the side of very many people, and particularly so by his, but I do not forget the victory of David over Goliath.”

“ Do you mean to say you think of engaging him in single combat ? ”

“ Why not ? ”

“ You intend to arrest him, alone ? ”

“ And if I do ? ”

“ You want to be killed, I presume ! ” exclaimed the Inspector.

“ That does not concern you. It is simply a question of performing a difficult task ; nobody likes to undertake it. I, on the contrary, will take it in hand, and I ask neither reward nor assistance of any kind. Allow me to say, sir,” he added, addressing himself this time directly to the chief, “ that to refuse so disinterested an offer of service would come with a bad grace from you.”

“ But nobody does refuse, and I am about



at once to put you in communication with those who can give you all the necessary information. One word more. Are you not afraid that, whilst you are engaged with this Langlade, you will be neglecting the other very important affair entrusted to you ? ”

“ Sir,” replied Vibert, “ two hours will suffice for the arrest of this Colossus of yours. I will take them out of my time for sleep—not a very difficult matter, seeing that I do not sleep.”

“ Well,” said the chief, with a smile, “ the description I have had of you is correct ; you are indeed a singular policeman.”

Vibert, by way of reply, bowed gravely.





## CHAPTER II.

ON the following morning, about half-past five, Vibert climbed, with a determined step, up the staircase of the house in the Rue-des-Petits-Champs, where Langlade was supposed to be sleeping. After having looked in vain for a bell outside the door pointed out to him, he knocked vigorously.

"Who's there?" shouted somebody inside the room.

"A detective to arrest you," replied Vibert.

"You are joking," said the voice. "If you were a detective, you would not say so. Those gentlemen take more precautions than that before they venture into my society. It's you is it not, Crampin?"

"Yes, yes, open the door."

"It's hard to get out of a warm bed, but for a friend one may brave the cold. I'll open the door, and jump into bed again."

Hardly had the bolt been shot and the key turned in the lock, than Vibert, who was all ready at the door, pushed it open quickly, burst into the room, made one bound towards the bed, and laid hold of a double-barrelled pistol, loaded and at full cock, which was lying on a table close by. Presenting it at Langlade, he exclaimed—

"Stir a step, and you are a dead man."

"A thousand devils!" shouted the convict, "it is a detective."

"Did I not tell you so, fool? Come, you are caught. Surrender."

"I surrender—never," exclaimed Langlade, exasperated. "I'd rather eat you, you rascal! You have my pistol, but I have a heavy fist, and teeth that cut like steel."

"Pooh!" said Vibert, quietly; "to make any use of them you must catch me, and if

you move an inch towards me I'll stretch you on the ground."

And with the pistol in his right hand raised to the level of his eye, just as if he were in a shooting gallery taking aim at a plaster figure, he sat down calmly on the bed which Langlade had just quitted. At four paces from him stood the convict, half naked, foaming with rage, but not daring to advance. They looked at each other for a moment, the one ready for a spring, the other to fire.

Vibert was the first to speak.

"Well," said he, in a bantering tone, "you have given up your idea of eating me. I am sorry for that. I should like an original kind of death."

"You must be a fool-hardy swaggerer to dare to get in here," exclaimed Langlade, suddenly controlling himself and looking round for something to make a weapon of.

"Enough of that," replied Vibert; "report makes you out much more terrible than you are. Come, don't fidget about in that way, or

I shall be obliged to shoot you in the leg to keep you quiet. What is it you want? What are you looking for? Your slippers, perhaps; you are cold about the feet. Here they are; take them. I am a good sort of fellow, and I shouldn't like you to catch cold."

And, always on his guard, he caught hold, with his left hand, of a pair of slippers which were at the foot of the bed, and threw them over to the convict.

"Thanks," said Langlade, who had by this time regained all his wonted assurance. "One is firmer on one's feet in slippers."

"That's just why I gave you yours. Would you like your coat, trousers and waistcoat? Don't worry yourself; I have them here close to my hand."

"Well, if you don't mind, I should like nothing better," replied the convict, wondering at this excess of politeness.

The coat, trousers and waistcoat, thrown across in the same way and with similar precaution, went after the slippers.

"Without wishing to be impertinent, what do you think you are going to do when you are dressed?" asked Vibert, as Langlade hastily put on his clothes.

"I don't exactly know yet; I have thought over it, but I have not quite made up my mind. I think I should throw myself upon you, if you had not that infernal pistol, which annoys me slightly."

"Would you like that, too?"

"That I should, but—"

"But you are afraid that I should like to keep it. There is no knowing. Come, if I give it up, what will you do with it?"

"Kill you with it, of course. That's a nice question to ask," replied the convict, shrugging his shoulders.

"Are you quite sure?" asked Vibert.

"Quite."

"At one fell swoop?"

"With one shot. I'll aim at your heart."

"Aim away, my friend. Here, take your pistol."

Vibert left his place, walked straight up to Langlade, gave him the pistol, turned his back on him, and seated himself again on the bed. Then he crossed his arms, and said—

“I am waiting.”

“You can’t be a detective,” said the convict, dumbfounded.

“Ungrateful!” said Vibert. “I have been kind to you, treated you in fact like a son, and you refuse to give me my titles and qualities.”

“What! You are a real detective?”

“Of course I am. What do you want me to be? A peer of France, perhaps. Not such a fool. They bore themselves too much. I know one who does nothing but eat his words all day long. I am a detective, a real one. Look here, I have in my pocket the principal attributes of my profession—a pair of handcuffs. They are, indeed, all I brought with me. I have left my sword stick at home.”

“Well, you are a cool hand!”

“You made that remark before, my dear

Langlade," observed Vibert, going back to the bed on the side towards the wall. "You are becoming monotonous."

"And you really think I am going to let you put those handcuffs on me?"

"You are going either to kill me, or to let me put the handcuffs on. Between ourselves, the choice lies with you; it's a matter of indifference to me. All I ask is that you will do one or the other."

"You don't care much about your life, then?"

"Don't be stupid! Should I have come to call you this morning if I had cared for my life? And you, do you care for yours?"

"A little, just now. I am loved."

"You are loved? Really! You are lucky, you are!"

"You are right," said the convict, assuming an air of importance.

Vibert took up his green eye-glass, looked at him through it, and said—

"Yes, I can understand women adoring you."



"They have such bad taste, and there is plenty of you."

Then abruptly turning his back on Langlade, and changing his tone, he continued—

"It is rather cold here, and you have forgotten to light your fire. Let us go; they are waiting for us."

"Where?"

"At the Conciergerie, an establishment where, I think, you will be suited down to the ground. You will be just in time to be examined to-morrow. Make yourself easy! In your position as a *cheval de retour*, they will pay every attention to you. You won't be herded with the small fry. You'll have a cell to yourself, I undertake to say."

"What! You ——," shouted Langlade.

"Don't make such a noise; you will rouse the neighbours, and it is only just six o'clock."

"The shot that I am going to fire straight at your heart will rouse them better."

"Leave me alone. You are always threaten-

ing and never doing. It is becoming wearisome," replied Vibert, stretching himself this time at full length upon the bed.

Langlade made one bound at him and presented the pistol full at his chest.

Vibert murmured a name, looked fixedly at Langlade, and waited.

It was impossible for this giant, whose strength was redoubled by anger, not to get the better of his puny, wasted, sickly, and unarmed enemy.

Nearly a minute passed away, and then the convict's eyes fell; he let go the pistol, and, stepping back, said—

"Ten thousand devils! I dare not kill him!"

"Well," said Vibert, getting up, "I ought not to have reckoned on it. I must suffer still."

"You are unhappy, then?" asked Langlade, coming near him.

"As the stones in a prison wall! So miserable that I would exchange my place as

a detective for yours as a convict on his way back to the hulks. Ah, if you could make that exchange you would be doing me a brave service. But I did not come here to unfold my paltry sorrows. This time nothing hinders us, let us go."

"Go, if you will. I shall not kill you. As for me, I stay here."

"That is impossible, my dear Langlade," replied Vibert, whose good humour was returning by degrees. "I have sworn to bring you with me. Come, don't let us stand on ceremony; you are a good sort of fellow, and so am I. Let us come to an understanding, and as quickly as possible. You have a mistress, have you not, called Stéphanie Cornu, nick-named Soleil-Couchant?"

"How do you know that?"

"Do not we detectives know everything? It is our profession to be well informed. Besides, if you insist on details, I do not mind telling you that Soleil-Couchant herself told us where you were to sleep to-night."

"It is false," bellowed Langlade.

"It is true, I tell you. If it were not true I should not amuse myself so uselessly at your expense. I have a great respect for love affairs, and I hold it to be cowardly to tell a man that his mistress is betraying him when such is not the case. It would be more merciful to kill him outright."

"Ah, you are right," said the giant, whose expression had entirely changed. "Rather than learn this infidelity I would be dead."

"You are not exacting, at any rate," said Vibert, with a sigh.

All of a sudden, Langlade confronted the detective, and, presenting the pistol at his head, he said—

"You swear that Soleil-Couchant has betrayed me?"

"I swear it," said Vibert, without moving a muscle.

The convict looked long at him, and then, drawing back, said—

"You cannot lie, you are too brave."

He sank in a chair, his arms hanging helplessly down, and whispered to himself—

“And it is for this that I have not lived for two days! The wretch! And yet I love her so well! She is all I love on this earth.”

Then, turning towards Vibert, he added, amidst a passion of tears—

“I give myself up; put the handcuffs on me.”

“What do you take me for?” said Vibert. “Take advantage of your weakness—never! Now that you are in a calmer frame of mind, we will see what can be done.”

The giant, in a corner, was sobbing like a child.

Vibert walked up and down, soliloquising—

“He is fortunate to be able to weep. As for me, I cannot, and my tears suffocate me.”

After a moment's delay he went up to Langlade, slapped him on the shoulder, and said—

“Come with me, and I will take care that you see Soleil-Couchant.”

The convict drew himself up—

“You know, then, where to find her?”

“Of course. She has been in prison since yesterday. Fear got possession of her; she was compromised in some very serious matters; she was lost, and was destined to be imprisoned for the rest of her life, and she betrayed you in order to secure the good graces of the Prefecture.”

“The coward! And you offer to bring me to her?”

“At once.”

“But I shall kill her.”

“That is your affair. I am merely ordered to arrest you, and you will find that you are sufficiently arrested when you reach the prison. If it then pleases you to kill Soleil-Couchant I have nothing to say against it. One woman more or less does not much matter,” added Vibert, contemptuously.

“I am ready; let us go,” exclaimed the convict.

“Let us go,” said the detective.



### CHAPTER III.

VIBERT, accompanied by Langlade, went down the stairs. The convict did not seem to know what he was doing. Buried in his thoughts, his head hanging down on his breast, he followed the detective mechanically, as a dog does his master. Soleil-Couchant had betrayed him. What mattered anything else?

When he reached the street door, however, the fresh air met him, and for a moment restored to him the use of his faculties. He raised his head, looked up and down the street, and said to Vibert—

“Well, where is your carriage?”

“What carriage?”

“The one your men are in.”

“I have no men with me.”

"You came alone to arrest me?"

"I have already told you so. I did not need to bring a squadron of cavalry to assist me. I am accustomed to do my little matters myself, and I find it answers. You seem to be annoyed at not seeing three or four fellows at your door buttoned up to the chin in tunics, and looking like mutes at a funeral. As for me, I am never seen in the street with such people; I am a cut above that. But if their absence annoys you I can send for them."

"No, it is useless."

"Don't be uneasy. You know that if you really want a first-class funeral I will manage it for you, and, at any rate, it won't cost you any more."

"No, I tell you that your society is quite enough for me," replied the convict, who was very far from appreciating the pleasantries of his companion.

"You are very good, I am sure, and I will return your politeness by calling a cab. We cannot go down there on foot."



A cab was passing, and Vibert hailed it. Then, pushing Langlade before him, he said—

“Get in first, I beg. Don’t stand on ceremony.”

He told the driver to proceed in the direction of the Palais-de-Justice, and seated himself by the convict. For a moment neither spoke, each giving way to his own reflections without disturbing his companion. Soon, however, Langlade, whose nerves were being shaken by the forced inaction, gave a vigorous kick at the seat in front of him, and exclaimed—

“To betray me thus—me, who have done so much for her!”

This exclamation called for no reply, but Vibert, always scrupulously polite, thought himself bound to make the following speech—

“My dear Langlade, oblige me by observing that she would not have been in a position to betray you if you had not done something for her. She would have given you up to us, and nothing more. To render treason possible there must be confidence and an utter absence

of reserve. Do you catch my argument? It is specious perhaps, but very just."

Langlade caught nothing, and resumed—

"Have I ever let her want for anything? Never! She has had from me all she desired. I was the slave of her every whim. If she had said to me, 'I want that shop full of jewellery,' I would have stripped the place the next night. One day, as we were walking along the Rue Vivienne, she called out, 'That dress would suit me to perfection.' That same evening it was in her room."

"You bought it?" asked Vibert ironically.

"No," replied the convict proudly, "I stole it."

"What an excellent plan to support a mistress without ruining oneself," thought the detective.

"Did I want money for myself? Nothing of the kind. A glass of wine, a hunch of bread, and a truss of straw. I asked for no more. I was brought up in the country and my tastes are simple."

"I have always noticed that," said Vibert to himself.

"It was for her sake that I was bound to have money at all risks. It was to meet her expenses that I first turned thief, and then assassin."

"Forsooth," said the detective sententiously, "take any crime you like, scratch the surface of it, and you will find a woman underneath. That idea is none of mine; it is as old as the hills. Would Adam have picked the apple if Eve had not hankered after it?"

"The last time I was sent to the hulks," continued Langlade, following out his own train of thought, "it was her doing. Did I ever reproach her? No, and at Brest I still found means to get hold of money for her to spend. For that I made those straw boxes and cocoa-nut manikins. But that was not enough. One day she wrote to me to say that she wanted a hundred francs. A hundred francs, how was I to find them on the hulks? I thought of robbing three convict warders of

their savings. For that I was condemned to the black hole for a month in double irons, but she got her hundred francs to pay her rent."

"Men are unjust," remarked Vibert, "robbing a warder merited a reward."

"In short," said Langlade, continuing to soliloquize in his corner, "it is for her sake that I have committed all my crimes, those that have come to light, as well as those that nobody knows."

Here Vibert started involuntarily. With his head indolently resting against one of the sides of the cab and his legs stretched out at full length on the opposite seat, he had contented himself with embellishing the conversation with an occasional aphorism. The convict soliloquized on one side, and the *employé* of the Prefecture of Police on the other—a very harmless mode of passing the time. But the convict's last words, "the crimes which have come to light, as well as those that nobody knows," aroused Vibert from

his listlessness. The detective, devoted to his profession and enamoured of his art, awoke to consciousness. On the previous night these words might have been used in his presence with impunity. He had been in such a state of syncope, in a condition of such mental and bodily prostration, that he would not have thought of paying any attention to them. What did the police, or his duties, or the crimes of a Langlade matter to him then? He waste his time indeed on a convict! It was Savari that he was after, and Savari alone. The world for him began and ended in the Rue de Grammont. When he volunteered to arrest Langlade, it was from no zealous motive, but merely in the hope of finding some distraction from his grief. This distraction he had found. The expedition he had just made, the danger he had run, his futile attempt to bid adieu to life, his morning walk in Paris cheek by jowl with a notorious criminal—all this had to a certain extent recalled him from his stupor. He took a new lease of life, and the

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Count de Rubini disappeared to make way for Vibert, the detective. There were then in Langlade's career crimes which were hidden from the world. They must be brought to light.

"By-the-way, do you know what time it is?" said Vibert, after a momentary pause of reflection.

The convict, thoroughly immersed in thought, did not reply. Vibert touched him on the arm.

"Eh, what? Here we are!" exclaimed Langlade, waking up with a start.

"No, not yet. I took the liberty of disturbing you to ask you if you knew the time."

"Hem! What does it matter to me what o'clock it is?"

"An idea has just flashed across me."

"What?"

"It is too early yet to see Soleil-Couchant."

"Ah!" shouted the convict in a threatening tone, "you are already on the look-out for an excuse to break faith with me."

"You are a queer customer," said Vibert calmly, "at the slightest provocation you go

off for all the world like a squib. What I have had the honour to convey to you is, nevertheless, very simple. I cannot present myself at the depôt of the Prefecture, and say to the gaolers, 'Gentlemen, allow me to introduce my friend, M. Langlade, an escaped convict. He is desirous of a moment's interview with his mistress, Mademoiselle Soleil-Couchant, who at the present time is an inmate of your house; would you have the kindness, gentlemen, either to request the young lady's attendance in her drawing-room, or to conduct M. Langlade to her chamber!' The gaolers would reply, 'This visit of M. Langlade does us much honour, and gives us even greater pleasure from the hope that we entertain of his making a long stay with us. But we have no power to disturb Mademoiselle Soleil-Couchant.' To secure an interview with her, a permit, duly authorized, is necessary, and the individuals who could oblige your friend with such a document are, at this early hour, still in bed! That, my dear Langlade, is what would as-

surely happen to you. You are no fool, and you will acknowledge the difficulty."

"Well, and what then?" asked Langlade curtly, altogether insensible to the sportive sallies of the detective.

"*Mon Dieu!*" replied Vibert, as mildly as ever, "I simply propose to while away two or three hours, where and as you please. There is a little delay, that is all. You can rely upon me, because I promise you I will not leave you. At 9 a.m., we will betake ourselves to the Prefecture, I shall interview the Chief of the Detective Force for an instant, I will tell him that I have pledged my word to you, and he will assist me in fulfilling my engagement. At 10 a.m., at the latest, you will be in the presence of Soleil-Couchant. Does that suit you?"

"It must suit me," said the convict surlily.

"Come, now, you are showing yourself amenable to reason. I expected as much from you. The question is, what are we to do with our spare time. Have you an idea?"



“ No.”

“ What say you to a good breakfast ? ”

“ I am not hungry.”

“ Selfish being ! That you may not be hungry is quite possible, but as for me, who had to get up at 5 a.m., to call upon you, you don't think of me. Besides, you overwhelmed me with emotion. You wanted to kill me, and you did not want to kill me. I shut my eyes and I opened them again. I said, it's all over—and, presto ! I began to live once more. All this kind of thing tends to create a vacuum, you understand. So, come along, take my advice, and let us put something into our stomachs. You will speak to Soleil-Couchant with greater eloquence than ever.”

“ Oh ! what I have to say to her will not take long,” exclaimed the convict.

“ I understand—to strike quickly is to strike home, and for that one need not possess the eloquence of Demosthenes. Nevertheless, if I were in your place, I should have relished first of all the satisfaction of heaping a reproach or two upon her. I should have liked to treat

her according to her deserts, and open out my heart to her."

"As for me, I am a poor hand at talking, but I can act."

"Don't contradict me. I say you would speak like an orator, if you had a beefsteak and a bottle of prime Chablis on your conscience."

"Do you think so?"

"Do I think so? On every occasion when I have an appointment with a woman, I begin by inviting myself to a good breakfast. Then one carries one's chin in the air, and lets one's tongue rattle away at the top of its bent."

"Yes, perhaps so," murmured the convict. "One might kill, without a moment's hesitation."

Vibert has touched the right chord.

"Is it a bargain?" he asked.

"Agreed."

"You are an angel."

And leaning out of the door, he called to the driver to put them down at Baratte's, in the Market Place.

"No, not there," cried Langlade.

"Why not? Do they feed you badly there?"

"I have another reason."

"You owe money there?"

"No, I don't owe anything."

"What is it, then?"

"I dined there three days ago with her," replied the convict, sighing.

Vibert looked at Langlade without any sign of astonishment; he understood him. A detective and a convict, two extremes, meet on some points. Vibert, too, perceived an advantage to be gained by bringing Langlade again to the room where he had dined with Soleil-Couchant.

"My dear friend," said he to his companion, "as a rule, I sympathize with all the little affairs of the heart, but there are, nevertheless, some which are beyond me. Let us think this out. Either you still love the faithless one, in which case it will be a pleasurable sensation to revisit a spot which witnessed your love; or you despise and execrate her, in which case anything of the sort must be a matter of complete indifference to you."

"I despise her; I hate her," exclaimed Langlade.

"Then to Baratte's let us go; and, by-the-by, here we are!"

"Come along," said the convict, who was anxious to avoid any sign of weakness.

They got out of the cab, went past the bar and ascended a kind of ladder, mis-called a staircase. On the first floor they were shown into a room, which drew from Langlade the exclamation—

"It is the same. I recognise it."

"Just the sort of thing that would happen by accident," replied Vibert, the philosopher.

He then ordered an excellent breakfast, suitable for the occasion, and seating himself opposite to the convict, he said to himself—

"I am not fit to belong to the police if by the time we have finished breakfast I have not wormed all his secrets out of this fool. I wonder what nice things, in hidden crimes, he has been guilty of?"



## CHAPTER IV.

BREAKFAST opened with four dozen oysters, and Vibert, by way of setting a good example, lost no time in doing honour to them. Langlade was not slow in keeping up with him. Either from the return of his appetite, or from braggadocio, he evidently was not desirous of seeming any longer to regret his faithless fair one.

"Give your orders," said Vibert, when the four dozen had disappeared ; "don't be bashful. The State pays the piper. I have some secret service funds."

"Then I vote for a Chateaubriand," said the convict, who was cheering up under the influence of the first bottle of wine.

"A Chateaubriand be it ; but I'll lay a wager that there is an idea connected with it."

"What idea?"

"A sentiment, a reminiscence. She must have asked for a Chateaubriand the last time you dined here. Confess, now."

"But—"

"Surely you don't want pressing, as if you were a girl."

"This devil of a man—there's no keeping anything from him," said Langlade, having recourse again to the wine.

"You love her still—this Soleil-Couchant of yours, eh?" asked Vibert.

"No, I don't love her any longer," replied the other, bringing his heavy fist down on the table with such force as to smash a couple of wine-glasses.

"Don't give me any of your silly nonsense. Is it possible, all of a sudden, to cease loving a woman whom one has adored all one's life?"

"Adored, yes, adored!" echoed the giant, with a sonorous sigh. "And she—she has never loved me."

"It's always the case."

"If you only knew the tricks she has played me."

"I have some idea of them ; they are always the same. And after each prank, you loved her all the more ; is it not so ?"

"Alas !"

He drank off a glass of wine, and added—

"But I don't want to talk any more about that. I should, perhaps, say too much—"

"That's worth knowing," muttered Vibert.  
"Rest easy, old fellow. We shall come back to it before we have finished breakfast."

Then turning towards Langlade, who was sitting, apparently in a dream, with his elbows on the table and his head between his hands, he said—

"Have you finished already ? Think better of it ; you won't sit down to such a breakfast again, perhaps, for a long time."

"Why not ?" asked the convict, raising his head.

"Why ? You ought to know by this time,

after your long experience, that the State is not in the habit of indulging her lodgers with Chateaubriands."

"I know that well enough. But, perhaps, I don't intend to take up my abode again with the State," said Langlade, looking the detective full in the face.

"Really?" replied the latter, without appearing in the least disturbed. "I laboured under the impression that I had had the pleasure of arresting you this very morning."

"You arrested me, I admit; but who is to prevent my going away when I have finished breakfast?"

"I!"

"You!" said the giant, laughing. "You have not had a good look at me, I suppose?"

He stood up, and his head touched the ceiling of the room.

"Well," said Vibert, looking at him through his glasses, "you are a fine man. I knew that, and I don't think it is very kind of you to



make a parade of your physical advantages before me.”

“And my shoulders; have you noticed them?” continued Langlade, glancing complacently at his reflection in a mirror which stood behind Vibert.

“Can you make them over to me? No. Then don’t go on displaying your charms. It is humiliating to me.”

“I only wanted to make you understand,” said the convict, sitting down again, “that when breakfast is over, it would be the easiest thing in the world for me to take you up in my arms, stuff a table-napkin in your mouth to prevent your crying out, and pitch you under the table whilst I took myself off at my ease to my own affairs.”

“Yes,” replied Vibert, ‘helping Langlade to half an omelet which the waiter had just placed on the table, “all that you have just said would appear at first sight very easy to carry out, that I admit, only—”

“Only?”

“You won’t carry it out.”

“Why?”

“Two considerations will prevent you.”

“What are they?”

“First of all, you will not be able even to get near me.”

“You are joking.”

“Not a bit of it, I am quite serious. Look here.” And as he said this he placed a double-barrelled pistol before him.

“Do you recognise it?” he asked.

“It is my pistol.”

“Evidently. Just now, in your despair, you forgot it. I, on the contrary, took possession of it. If, during your absence, a domiciliary visit had by chance been paid to your residence, the discovery of this weapon would have compromised you, and I wanted to save you that unpleasantness. Oh,” he continued, “it is of no use your casting longing eyes on the pistol. I am not going to give it up to you again. Times have changed considerably in the last hour. This morning I did not care one straw

about my life ; now, your society and this wine have made me quite sprightly once more, and I wish to live. Have the goodness to remember that. What shall we have for dessert ? ” he added, resuming his pleasant manner. “ I propose Roquefort cheese, some almonds and raisins and a cup of capital coffee with a dash of brandy in it. Does that please you ? ”

“ As you like,” was the surly reply. “ But you spoke to me of two considerations which would prevent me leaving the restaurant without you. You have told me the first—now for the second.”

“ Oh, the second is a better one still.”

“ Let us have it.”

“ I promised that before lodging you in prison I would procure you the pleasure of seeing Soleil-Couchant. You would not wish to put it out of my power to keep my promise ? ”

“ Pshaw ! I value my liberty more than a woman,” replied Langlade carelessly.

“ Soleil-Couchant is not merely a woman in your eyes—she is an idol, a fetish.”

"I shall always find her again."

"In ten years, two years, six months, I'll say even a fortnight, to oblige you. But what you want is to see her to-day, at once, and to be able to cast in her teeth all the reproaches your heart has been heaping up against her for the last two hours, and which are choking you."

"Yes, yes, that is it," cried the convict, who an instant before had tossed off a whole glass of neat brandy. "And when I have told her all that is in my heart I'll strangle her with these hands."

"There you'll be making a mistake," observed Vibert, taking possession of the brandy bottle. He wanted to make Langlade tipsy, but he did not wish him to become dead drunk.

"Why should I be wrong?" asked the convict.

"Because it is a stupid thing to commit murder so long as other and better methods of revenge are possible."

“What are they?”

“A day in prison has frightened Soleil-Couchant. She was afraid of being shut up for ten years, nay, five perhaps, and she has split upon you. Well, split upon her in your turn. She must have been your accomplice in more than one misdeed. One word from you would send her to the Assizes, and the judges would take care to forward her on at once to some central establishment where she would betray no one.”

Langlade reflected for a moment, and then said—

“No. I should dearly like to kill her, but I don’t want to make her suffer.”

“I have missed my aim,” said Vibert to himself. “This convict is too virtuous. Now for another plan.”

“There you are,” he resumed, “you still love her, you see.”

“Ah, yes, I do love her. Yes, *mon Dieu*, I do love her,” exclaimed the convict, rising.

“But you are not jealous.”

"I am not jealous, I?"

"No. If you were jealous, you would have her shut up so as to make sure of her during your stay at Brest or Toulon."

"I tell you, I am going to kill her," shouted Langlade, as he went up to Vibert and caught hold of his hands with an iron grasp fit to break them. "Oh, no, I am not jealous," he continued, growing more and more excited every moment. "Not I—I assassinated a man on account of her!"

"Don't tell me that," said Vibert, "or I shall be obliged to denounce you." He knew that a man in love or drunk always speaks out in proportion as his confidence appears to be shunned.

"Then denounce me," cried the convict, by this time roused to a pitch of excitement. "Since Soleil-Couchant has betrayed me I would rather mount the scaffold than go back again to the hulks!"

He seized hold of the bottle of brandy, Vibert this time not making any difficulty about

giving it up. Putting the mouth of the bottle to his lips, he took huge gulps of the fiery spirit, and then, coming as close as possible to the detective, he continued in a low voice—

“Yes, I repeat, I assassinated a man on her account. It is not so long ago either—it was in October or November last. She lived then in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, near the Gaillon Circus. One night I went to her house and knocked at her door. She did not answer. I thought she had gone out, and I was just going away when I heard voices in the room. Then I went down to the next floor and waited. An hour passed away. The door opened and gave egress to a man, whom she accompanied as far as the landing.

“‘We shall meet again soon,’ she said, and embraced him. ‘Why did I not go upstairs and kill the pair of them? I don’t know. The man came downstairs. I drew aside to let him pass, and then I followed him. He went along the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin and the Rue de la Paix. Suddenly he stopped at the gate

of a court-yard and went in. I did the same. I don't know what happened afterwards. I had lost my head. I only remember the cry—a terrible cry—which escaped my victim. Five minutes afterwards I rejoined Soleil-Couchant and said to her—

“ ‘ I have killed your lover ! ’ ”

This narrative, interspersed with fresh libations, completely exhausted Langlade, and his head fell heavily forward on the table.

All the efforts made by Vibert to extract further details were useless. Besides, what need had he of details? Was not the tale he had just listened to clear enough?

Whilst the convict slept a leaden sleep the detective philosophized, but his thoughts turned once more towards the Rue de Grammont.

“ Men are always the same, then,” he said to himself. “ Their wives go away for a couple of months and they have not strength of mind to remain faithful to them ! They have all that they can want—a pretty creature appears



on the scene and smiles on them, and away go their promises, their duty, and their love."

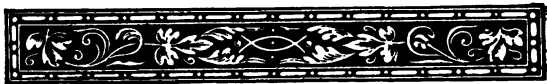
He shrugged his shoulders.

"And love! How came I to make use of that word? Do such people love? They desire, and that is all. When one truly loves a woman, there exists none other woman in all the world. If I were to be cast on a desert island with Soleil-Couchant, she would be no more to me ten years hence than she is now, if indeed I had not died long before that from weariness of her companionship. He only received his meet reward," continued he after a momentary pause. "To deceive such a woman as that was infamous!"

When, an hour later, the convict awoke, Vibert wished to resume the conversation from where they had left off. But Langlade, half sober again, obstinately refused to say a word more. He had only one fixed idea—to see Soleil-Couchant as soon as possible. The police agent saw that it would be dangerous to delay much longer the performance of his

promise, so he paid the bill, cocked his pistol, got into the cab, which had been waiting all this time, and drove off with his companion in the direction of the Prefecture.





## CHAPTER V.

THE journey of Vibert and his prisoner was accomplished without further incident. Langlade, still stupified from the effects of his drunken bout, crouched in one corner of the vehicle and said not a word. The detective watched him narrowly ; with one hand on the pistol, he was ready to fire at the first sign of any attempt to escape. He had no wish to lose his prize now that he was in sight of port.

When they came within a few yards of the Prefecture, Vibert told the driver to stop and, as Langlade was about to get out, Vibert took him by the arm, and said—

“ One word, please.”

“ Again ! ” growled the convict.

“ Make yourself easy, I shall not be long.

It is only a question of our understanding each other thoroughly."

"Very well," said Langlade, with an air of resignation, and settling himself in his corner again.

"I don't know," commenced Vibert, "what sort of opinion you entertain of police agents in general. Probably it is not a very favourable one, which is not to be wondered at. But I, personally, am possessed of a small amount of *amour propre*, and I don't wish you to think of me more unfavourably than you can help. Let us sum up our position and put the case simply and clearly, so that you may never have to reproach me. You have expressed a wish to see Soleil-Couchant, I have promised that you shall see her, and I will keep my word ; first of all, because I have no interest in not doing so ; secondly, because a police agent who respects himself and his profession, should never, according to my idea, deceive a prisoner. That would be descending far too low. But be assured that when you set your foot

inside the Prefecture, you are neither more nor less than an escaped convict, an habitual criminal, a dangerous being engaged in open warfare against society, against whom too many precautions cannot be taken. You can then no longer count upon me ; my influence ceases at the door of that grim, stern building you see before you. It is but a moment since I was to you a next door neighbour at table, a travelling companion, a comrade into whose ears you poured your domestic sorrows. From this moment I become a simple servant of the Prefecture. I have arrested you, I hand you over to the proper authorities, and come what may, my task is done. I return to my other duties."

"You will not leave me without bringing me face to face with Soleil-Couchant?" said Langlade, who, ever intent on his one fixed idea, had paid but little attention to Vibert's harangue.

"That is understood," replied he, "but

before we say good-by, do me the favour of holding out your hands."

"Why?"

"So that I may put on the handcuffs."

"But I will not harm any one," said the convict quite tamed, and as gentle as a child, "Soleil-Couchant is the only one I have any grudge against."

"My friend," replied Vibert with his wonted suavity, "for four hours we have been living side by side, and I have given you sufficient proof, I think, that I am not afraid of you. But from this time we shall not be alone. I am going to take you up the staircase, along corridors and into offices, where you will meet a crowd of people who know you by sight or reputation, and in whom you inspire very serious though, I admit, exaggerated alarm. It is in the interest of their peace of mind that I propose this small precautionary measure. Have the kindness to agree to it."

"But if I have the handcuffs on," said the

convict naively, and in a mild tone, "I shall not be able to kill Soleil-Couchant."

"In the first place," replied Vibert, "the handcuffs won't prevent you raising your arms and bringing them down on anybody's head. With the strength you are fortunate enough to possess a simple movement of that kind will suffice to rid you of several weak women. Then, seeing that the life of Soleil-Couchant is, as I have already told you, a matter of perfect indifference to me, I undertake, if you make a point of it, to have your handcuffs removed as soon as you are in her presence."

"Let there be an end to all this; I am in a hurry," said Langlade, as he put out his hands.

Vibert took advantage of the permission, and called out to the driver—

"Drive down the Rue de Jérusalem, enter the court yard of the Prefecture, and stop at the principal staircase."

Five minutes afterwards, Vibert, having sent in his name, entered, with his prisoner, the

office of the chief of the detective force. He went up to the desk and said—

“I have kept my promise, and have brought him.”

“Who?” said the chief raising his head.

“Langlade—here he is.”

“And you, yourself, arrested him?”

“I alone. Did I not undertake to do so?”

“It is well done, sir, I thank you on my own personal account. You have rendered us a signal service. In an hour’s time I shall see the Prefect, and I promise you I will speak of you.”

“As you wish, sir, but I shall decline any kind of reward for this affair, which has interested me deeply and has served as a distraction from other engrossing thoughts. I have only one request to make.”

“It is granted in advance.”

The chief got up from his chair and retired with Vibert to a recess of one of the windows.

“It is understood,” he said, after a short conversation, “I am, moreover, entirely of



your opinion that promises made to persons of this class should always be kept. They fear us, hate us, kill us, but they are forced to respect us. Langlade shall be taken for a few hours to one of the cells in the Conciergerie, and I will give orders about his mistress."

"I should like," said Vibert, "to see this woman for a few moments before she meets Langlade. I have an important point to clear up in connection with another affair, and she may be able to give me some useful information."

"That is enough. You have only to go to the dépôt, and here is a note for the head gaoler."

Vibert bowed and withdrew, whilst the officers, summoned by the chief, led Langlade away to the Conciergerie. This man, so energetic, so brutal, so terrible, quietly followed the men who had possession of him. He had but one thought – to see Soleil-Couchant as quickly as possible. Any resistance would have retarded the moment he awaited with such ardent longing.

The news of his arrest spread rapidly through the police offices, to the secretary's department, and to the first division. The younger *employés*, the office messengers, and such strangers as happened to be in the Prefecture at the time flocked to see him pass. On all this assemblage he turned a look of calm indifference. What was the court to him? He reserved all the fire of his anger for the woman who had thrown him over and betrayed him.





## CHAPTER VI.

STÉPHANIE CORNU, nicknamed Soleil-Couchant, was a regular red-haired girl. It is indispensable that this point should be clearly understood in these days, when women's hair changes colour so easily.

"Sourent *chereu* varié;  
Bien fol est qui s'y fie,"

would have said a Francis the First of the present day.

Soleil-Couchant had all the beauties and all the charms of her complexion, as she certainly had some of its drawbacks. She was a fine, handsome girl, admirably set up, with broad shoulders, and small in the waist. Her bust was developed to perfection, her hips clearly defined, and her hand and foot, though large,

were well-formed. In her physiognomy there was something strange, at once tender, cold, lascivious, impassioned and cruel. Very thin and somewhat pale lips closed on white, small and sharp teeth, separated one from the other. Her chin was heavy and sensual, her nose small, decidedly *retrousé*, and with nostrils very much dilated and always quivering. Her eyes, long, like the Chinese, had no distinct colour, but were green, blue, grey, or yellow, according to the time of the day and the amount of light, and were surmounted by eyebrows thick and well-arched, a rare thing with such a complexion. A few freckles appeared here and there, but they were so artistically, as it were, disposed that, far from detracting from the personal appearance, they lent it additional originality. As regards her hair, we may possibly be asked to indicate, with greater exactness, its precise shade. To say that a woman has red hair, is not enough. If there are degrees in crime, there are still more in redness. We will answer for it that the nickname of

Soleil-Couchant, which had been bestowed on Stéphanie Cornu, was amply deserved. Her thick, bushy, wavy hair, which, when let loose, reached down to her knees, had all the shadows and reflected light of the sun, as he sinks to rest after a hot autumnal day.

In our day, that is in 1866, a creature such as the one we have just described so imperfectly would have created a perfect *furor*. No dress too elegant, no establishment too luxurious, no carriages too stylish, could be found for her. But in 1847 fashion had not yet delivered its final verdict on the subject of red hair in women. In those days, evidently behind their time, chestnuts and browns still retained some of their sway, and when, two or three years later, some adventurous spirits founded the famous *Comité des Blondes*, everybody exclaimed against such a scandal. They would have cried out still more loudly if they had known that this crafty *Comité*, whilst apparently protecting the fair-haired daughters of Eve,

was in reality paving the way in the future for the Empire of the red.

Soleil-Couchant ought certainly to have been born fifteen years later. We will not undertake to say, however, that in the present day, even with the aid of her original and fashionable style of beauty, she would have attained to any lofty eminence in the gay world. She would undoubtedly have achieved success, but an ephemeral one, such as attends on a grand pyrotechnical display. She would not have made a position for herself, as the majority of her sisters do. It was not her fault. She had no idea of placing a proper value on herself—a great art in our time, and one which covers a multitude of imperfections, faults and even vices in those who possess it.

A man of the world who puts a proper value on himself is careful to dress elegantly, to have his shirts artistically ironed, and to wear irreproachable boots. He would not for an Empire be seen out walking in Paris in any-

thing but a tall hat, even in the month of August. He would not dream of riding in a cab, and to carry a parcel, however small, in his hand would be a trial greater than his courage could bear. He would have a dozen mistresses, would ruin himself for them, and at the same time endanger the future of his wife and children, but he would not under any circumstances be seen in a private box at the opera, or in an open carriage in the Bois, with the least compromising of his dozen frail friends. It would be a rule with him never to pay his tradesmen, but he would be punctual to a moment in squaring his Bourse account, or paying a turf wager or a gambling debt.

A woman of the world who puts a proper value on herself will drive half-a-dozen intrigues abreast, if it suits her, but she will never parade her lovers. She will appear as often as possible, surrounded by her husband and her children, and will cry quits by entirely forgetting them at certain seasons. She will be as full of levity as she pleases in the silence of her chamber,

but before the world she will forbid the smallest attempt at flirtation.

As for the woman who is gay by profession, men require her also to put a proper value on herself. They don't mind being made fools of, but it must be amongst persons of their own class. They object to meeting in their mistress' *boudoir* a man whom they would not acknowledge in the street. "If she is not content with me alone," say they, "let her get hold of somebody else, but she must have delicacy enough to choose him out of my own set. Amongst my acquaintances she will find plenty of good-natured men who will take some of my numerous expenses on their own shoulders. But, for heaven's sake, don't let her make me incur the risk of running up against young lawyers' clerks, gentlemen who distinguish themselves on the trapeze, or dramatic authors whom, though thoroughly respectable, I prefer to meet only in the theatre. I pay, it is true, but, for the sake of my *amour propre*, I like others to do the same."



From this point of view, Soleil-Couchant was a failure. Her nature was fantastic to a degree, and ever since her appearance on the stage of life, she had invariably sacrificed her interests to her caprices. She did not understand denying herself a *tête-à-tête* with a man who took her fancy, and it mattered little to her if he wore huge top boots, a spangled cloak, the tatters of a first villain in a melodrama, or the mask of a low comedy man at the *Délassements*.

A tale is told of her that one evening, during the brief period when she was the rage, she suddenly conceived a *penchant* for a figurant at the Variétés. To get to him as quickly as possible, she hurriedly left her stage box, in which were seated a peer of France and two *attachés* of an Embassy. She probably manifested similar precipitation in falling in love with Langlade. His vast size, upright carriage, and enormous shoulders captivated her at first sight and, actuated by her inordinate curiosity, she evidently wished to know how such giants

spoke of love—whether they were tender, passionate, or eloquent.

As soon as she had acquired this information, her curiosity, as usual with her, was turned elsewhere. But here she met with a trifling obstacle which, in the end, served to complicate her life in a most unmistakable manner. Langlade, as far as eloquence was concerned, was seriously in love, we might say enormously so, as he was a giant. His heart was in proportion to his size, and in it there was room for an ardent, real love, as well as for violent passions. He did not quite see the force of being cast aside just as easily as he had been taken up. He declared that if Soleil-Couchant had had enough of him, he had not had enough of her. He obstinately refused to resign in favour of others; he forced himself on her with violence and brutality, and Soleil-Couchant, who began to tremble in his presence, had to submit.

From that moment the life of the lovely Stéphanie Cornu was turned upside down. To

be seen in public twice with Langlade was sufficient to place her under the ban of refined Bohemia. Her most intimate acquaintances, her most indulgent friends, could not but shun her. This Langlade, though as yet not having paid a visit to the hulks, had already given evidence of a tendency to them. His loose style of dress, his ribald tongue, and his bullying manner rendered him the most compromising individual in the world. He seized upon Soleil-Couchant as if she were his prey ; he took possession of her by right of his might ; he compelled her to live with him, and forbade her all else. These two beings were more closely bound together than if the church and the civil power together had united them.

But one must live, and in modern society physical force is only really useful to coal-heavers, commissionaires, and the labouring classes ; being strong means in Paris from three to five francs a day. That sum might have sufficed for Langlade, but it was not nearly enough for Soleil-Couchant. It was then that

he had recourse to theft to keep up with the expenses of his mistress. He thrashed her as he would a dog, if she played any of her pranks, however trivial, but he did not know how to refuse the least of her fancies. Soleil-Couchant had plenty of the latter to compensate her for being thrashed, and one fine day, when Langlade, fully-armed, was endeavouring to satisfy one of Stéphanie's wishes in a watchmaker's shop, he was seized by the collar, and sent shortly afterwards to the hulks at Toulon.

Hardly had Soleil-Couchant commenced to breathe again and was thinking of forming ties more easily broken, than her dear tyrant, of whom she thought herself rid for ever, rejoined her and awoke her rudely from her dream of independence. Unable to live apart from his mistress, he had made use of his strength and broken his fetters.

Stéphanie Cornu now enjoyed, if anything, less liberty than before. Compelled to avoid the attentions of the police—as a rule rather

pressing as regards escaped convicts—Langlade thought it very natural that he should conceal himself in the furnished apartment occupied by Soleil-Couchant. He never left her for a moment. He watched over her with the most touching solicitude ; he clung to her more closely than ivy to an old oak.

Jealous to a degree, he never let her go out, under the pretext that he could not accompany her for fear of being arrested. Six months of unalloyed bliss passed away. Langlade was the happiest of men, and Stéphanie, from behind her blinds, eyed the *sergents de ville*, thinking that they would do well to pay her house a visit.

The poor woman saw no more shops, and was reduced to an utter absence of caprice.

One day, however, she expressed a wish for some furniture. Langlade, always complacent, hastened to oblige her. He went out on two successive nights, made his excellent arrangements, and on the third night ransacked from

top to bottom a country house in the environs of Paris.

He carried out this exploit in a most conscientious manner, as a man of his eminently generous disposition knew well how to do ; he even brought away the entire set of pots and kettles, so that Stéphanie might not have to purchase any.

The proprietor of the house, who had undoubtedly never been in love, had the bad taste to complain. The police were indelicate enough to listen to him, followed up the traces left by the pots and kettles, and arrested, this time, not only Langlade but Soleil-Couchant with him.

Ah ! if the judges had only had the good sense to inflict the same punishment on both of them, and had made them serve out their time in the same prison, Langlade would have still been the happiest of men,

But he was condemned, as an escaped convict, to twenty years on the public works and

sent to Brest, whilst Soleil-Couchant, treated as a receiver of stolen goods, was confined for a year to the tender mercies of Saint-Lazare.

The day she left her prison, just at the expiration of the year, she found a carriage awaiting her at the door of Saint-Lazare, and on the box, disguised as a driver, her faithful Langlade, who had escaped from Brest a week previously for the express purpose of celebrating the deliverance from custody of his beloved mistress.

We know how he was arrested for the third time, and how Soleil-Couchant had contributed in no small degree to that event.

All these minute and private details were unknown to the police. They imagined, naturally, that, frightened by her own arrest, and trembling at the idea of being again compromised by Langlade's misdeeds and consigned to a central establishment, she had denounced her lover in order to secure the favour of the judges in her behalf.

They did not know Stéphanie Cornu. She

was not a woman to allow herself to be frightened for so little. She had denounced Langlade for the purpose of getting rid of him until his next escape, and she had caused her own arrest so that she might be out of the way of his first fits of rage and fury. To plenty of heart, Soleil-Couchant could add a more than ordinary intelligence. Red-haired women are never commonplace.







## CHAPTER VII.

AT the moment when Vibert entered her cell Soleil-Couchant was sitting on the bed and was playing, like a child, with her hair, which she had unloosed and had gathered across her chest.

A ray of sunlight, penetrating the thick walls of the Conciergerie through the window bars, shimmered over the luxuriant tresses and imparted to her a dazzling effect.

Any other man than the police agent would have admired the picture, but Vibert reserved his admiration for other subjects. He shut the door behind him, as Stéphanie Cornu taken by surprise, cast her hair behind her and essayed to fasten it up.

"So, my child," said Vibert, with a paternal

air and without further preamble, "here you are, caught again?"

"*Mon Dieu*, yes," replied Soleil-Couchant, who, during her stay at Saint-Lazare, had become familiar with prison usages, and was, therefore, dismayed neither by Vibert's abrupt entrance nor by his cavalier manners.

"You will end by making them send you to a central establishment," replied he.

"Let them send me there. I should like that just as well."

"What! You have passed a year in Saint-Lazare, and yet a prison has no terrors for you?"

"A prison to me is paradise—liberty is hell," replied Soleil-Couchant, in a tone which, to say the least, was emphatic.

"What is that you say? You are not happy in town?"

"Happy! I?"

"Does not your establishment go on all right?"

"My establishment?—oh!"

No phrase can do justice to the expression she put into these words. No sentence, nor any speech, however long, could have been clearer, or could have given Vibert a better idea of the situation.

He divined in a second the ordeals through which this woman had passed, the sufferings she had endured, the rage which had possessed her, and the hate which was smouldering within her.

"Then," he resumed, after a short silence, "it is not sufficient to be a giant in order to render a woman happy."

She confronted Vibert and said—

"You know him?"

"Not quite so well as you do, fortunately for me; but I know him."

"Well," she exclaimed, "I hate him."

"That is easily perceived," remarked Vibert.

She seized him by his hands, drew him close to her, so that he should not lose a word of what she was about to say, and then, with

her features convulsed with anger, her long hair sparkling round her head and over her bare shoulders, she continued—

“Yes, I hate him! I want to say it—to shout it aloud—so that everybody may hear me! At last I can speak to another man besides him! I have broken asunder my chains; my tyrant does not keep watch over me any more—I no longer tremble before him! Ah, the wretch! Has he not made me suffer enough—has he not treated me as his slave, his plaything, his dog! For five long years that has lasted. Yes, five years, and for more than three of them I have been obliged to live side by side with him. What torture! Oh! those giants! I have done well to come back here. I was happy only at Saint-Lazare—there at least I breathed. I was free. What tyranny! I, who was formerly so gay and cheerful, obeying my own fancies alone— My fancies, did I say? My last was a successful one, indeed! What, because one takes a man for a day, must he be a clog on one for ever;

must he rivet a chain on one's feet, and stamp his brand on one's shoulder? 'I love you,' he would say, 'I love you, and I will not leave you.' What does it matter if he did love me, since I loved him no longer? If you don't love a man any more it is nothing, less than nothing. You say to him—'Go away,' and he ought to go. Do not my youth and beauty belong to me? I consent to lend them, but I don't give them away. I am not a lease, nor a grant in perpetuity! What a coward I have been—what a coward! I, formerly so valiant and so brave! I, to whom everybody hastened to yield! Ah! men—how I despise them! They might weep, shout, whisper, in vain. I would say—'You weary me!' and they would come to throw themselves at my feet the next day. Whilst he—he suddenly bent, broke, crushed me. His hoarse, stern voice made me tremble—his least movement made me shiver. He commanded, and I obeyed—I would have grovelled at his feet if he insisted on it, and he did insist, the coward! He revelled in the

abuse of his strength. Why was I called Soleil-Couchant? They ought to have said Chien-Couchant! Yes, I was a dog, nothing but a dog, and of the worst breed! He struck me, and after he had done it he would say—‘Forgive me,’ and I appeared to forgive him, so that I should not be struck a second time. He would say to me, ‘Am I not handsome?’ and I would answer, ‘Yes, you are—very handsome.’ ‘And you love me, do you not?’ he would add. And I murmured, ‘I adore you!’ That was because I knew him, and that he would not be contradicted, the monster! In one of his angry fits he is capable of anything and everything. He would have killed me without hesitation, and I am so fond of life! Why, I know not, except that death frightens me. I want to live; for five years past I have not lived. I long for liberty, the sun, the fresh air!”

She stopped to take breath, and then went on—

“I don’t know you, sir, but you belong to—

the police—that is easily seen by the way you came into my cell and your manner of speaking to me. Langlade, consequently, is your enemy. You cannot have any goodwill towards an escaped convict. You will not betray me? Yes, if I committed a crime yesterday, it was to ensure being arrested, safe from his pursuit, and freed from his presence. I had scarcely come here before I was recognized and asked about Langlade. I replied without reserve, and they thought I wanted to purchase the good graces of the police—your good graces! What should I do with them? You are my friends, gentlemen. I only ask one thing of you—keep me amongst you as long as you can. Does the prison terrify me? Nothing terrifies me, nothing! I am brave, I am! He alone makes me tremble, he alone! Away from him, all my energy comes back to me.”

“Well, my child,” said Vibert, “you can make yourself easy. Thanks to your excellent information, Langdale has just been arrested.”

“Really?” she cried, starting back,  
“really?”

“Nothing more real?”

“Ah! I never expected it.”

Her face beamed with delight, and she seemed to breathe more easily.

“He did not defend himself, then?” she asked, for she did not dare believe in her good fortune.

“Very little,” was the reply.

“And who was bold enough to arrest him?”

“I!”

She looked at Vibert, smiled contemptuously, and said—

“It is impossible.”

“Why?” he replied, with a suspicion of contempt in his voice, “because I am six inches shorter than he is? Height is nothing,” he continued, warming to his subject, “intelligence is everything. You are too material to understand this; physical power dazzles you, and you don’t pay sufficient attention to the



mind. But, nevertheless, an hour was enough to make a regular sheep of this Langlade of yours, whilst you, in five years, have not learnt how to manage him."

"Then it was you who arrested him?" she asked, still harping on her own idea.

"I myself, and I alone."

Suddenly she bounced towards Vibert, and kissed him with effusion on both cheeks.

"You are very kind, and, above all, very expansive, my dear," said Vibert, perfectly insensible to this unexpected caress, "but I cannot quite account for the joy you appear to feel. Langlade is arrested, he is in prison, and he will be sent to the hulks once more. So far so good. But he has escaped twice and will escape a third time, and then your martyrdom will commence afresh with renewed severity."

Soleil-Couchant's face fell.

"You will never be easy," continued Vibert, "you will never sleep with both eyes shut, notwithstanding that you know he is on the hulks."

He will lease them as he would a country residence. You could make more sure of him than that."

"How?" she asked, not yet seeing the detective's drift.

"There are other sentences in the Penal Code than that of hard labour."

"What?"

"Death, for example."

She turned pale and said—

"They could not condemn him to death; he has not done anything to merit that."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Vibert, going up to her, and looking straight into her eyes.

She turned paler still, and the detective heard her say under her breath—

"I will not speak. No, this time I will not speak. I don't want him to be put to death."

"It is extraordinary," observed Vibert, "what a difference of opinion there is between Langlade and you. You say—'I want him to be imprisoned, but I don't want him to die.'"

He said to me only a moment or two ago—  
'I don't want her to be imprisoned; I want her  
to die.'

"Ah! he said so?"

"I give you my word he did."

"He wishes to see me die?"

"Not only to see you die, but to kill you  
himself."

"How could he kill me? He is in prison."

"Nothing would be easier. I will even confess  
to you that at this moment you are in  
very great danger."

"I told you I was afraid of death, and you  
want to terrify me—"

"Think what you please, but I swear to  
you that Langlade is now plotting against your  
life."

"Why should he kill me? What have I  
done to him?"

"You have betrayed him."

"He does not know it."

"I beg your pardon, I told him."

"What! you have—"

"It was my only means of quieting him."

"It is infamous!" she exclaimed. "The Commissioner of Police, to whom I gave the information as to Langlade's whereabouts, promised that my name should not be mentioned."

"The Commissioner has kept his promise. I did not make any, and consequently said what seemed best to me."

"I am lost! I am lost if he escapes."

"Let us prevent him escaping, and send him to the Assizes. The jury will send him to the scaffold."

"He might be acquitted."

"Impossible, if he has on his conscience a murder, even in a very minor degree. There is no joking with a twice-escaped galley-slave, with three previous convictions against him and possessing such a terrible reputation as his."

"It is true," she said, "he will be condemned."

"Then speak, if you wish to live."

"Certainly I wish to live, but how will you

preserve my life? He is arrested and in prison, but still you say yourself that I run the risk of being killed by him."

"You want some pledge?"

"It would be better so."

"Listen. After having learnt your betrayal of him, Langlade, as you may well understand, hesitated still to follow me. Then, to decide him, I gave him my word that I would bring him this very day, this morning, face to face with you."

"Face to face with me?" she cried in alarm, "when he had told you that he would kill me?"

"Assuredly. What did that signify to me? I did not even know you by sight."

She reflected for an instant and said—

"Would you keep your promise if I were to tell you what you want to know?"

"It is impossible for me to do otherwise. But there is such a thing as keeping one's promise in the spirit, though not in the letter. Instead of having Langlade brought, as I had intended, here into your cell, I will have him

taken simply to the waiting-room of the Conciergerie. You will go down there from your side. He will say what he pleases to you, he can insult you at his ease, but he will not be able to touch a hair of your head for there will be an iron grating between him and you."

"But," objected Soleil-Couchant, who forgot nothing so long as her life was in question, "suppose he has fire-arms about him?"

"As for that, make yourself quite easy. Persons who find their way into the Conciergerie are searched from head to foot. However, as an extra precaution, and because of the interest I take in you, I will have him searched afresh. Besides, you can see for yourself that he is already disarmed, if you cast your eyes on this pistol."

Stéphanie looked at the weapon held out to her by Vibert, and said—

"Yes, I recognise it. Ah! he has frightened me often enough with that weapon! He never ceased to threaten me with it. As recently as last week he wanted to blow out my brains on the pretence that I had been coquetting with a

neighbour through the window. So whilst he was asleep, I took the pistol, unscrewed the barrels, and took out all the powder. Pull the trigger yourself, and see. The pistol will not go off."

Vibert let down the two hammers, the caps went off, but no shot was heard.

"And," said he laughing, "here have we been, Langlade and I, threatening each other in downright earnest with this pistol. So much for imagination!"

He was about to resume the conversation at the point where they had left off, when Soleil-Couchant, who was standing by his side, put her arms quickly round his neck, drew his face next her own, and said to him in her cat-like voice—

"You have some sense then?"

"I have always thought so," replied Vibert, trying to disengage himself from her embrace.

She held him fast and added—

"Langlade is tall, fat, and a fool; you are short, thin, and intelligent. I like you."

“What, all of a sudden, at first sight?” he asked.

“*Dame !*” she said, “it is such a long time since I had a caprice of any kind.”

“I understand now,” said Vibert coldly, “how your lover comes to distrust your character slightly ; it does not offer good security, but,” he added as he got away from her grasp, “this is no time for billing and cooing ; both the hour and the place are ill chosen. We have serious matters to talk about. Sit down, and don’t conceal anything from me, or, I swear to you, you are lost, in spite of your coaxing ways. It depends upon you, and upon you alone, whether you see Langlade half an hour hence in the waiting-room behind an iron grating, or are shut up with him for a *tête-à-tête* in this cell.”

This last prospect made Soleil-Couchant shudder and brought all her gravity back. She sat down on her sacking bed, put her hair, which had become more and more dishevelled, into some sort of order, and waited for Vibert to question her.





## CHAPTER VIII.

VIBERT this time did not beat about the bush, but went straight at his subject.

"A young man," said he to Soleil-Couchant who listened to him with the greatest attention, "was assassinated this winter in the Rue de la Paix, near the top of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, where you then lived with Langlade. What information can you give me with reference to this still unpunished murder?"

"But," asked she, "how does it happen—?"

"That I come to you for information? Nothing more simple. This morning Langlade, in a moment of excitement and intoxication, confessed his crime to me."

"Well?" asked Soleil-Couchant.

"That is not enough," replied Vibert, "justice

requires details and actual proof. For them I come to you."

"Put your questions, and I will answer them."

"For how long had you known the man assassinated by Langlade?"

"Two days."

"You had never seen him before that?"

"Never."

"Where did you meet him?"

"On the boulevards, at the top of the Rue Vivienne, about three o'clock in the afternoon."

"At the top of the Rue Vivienne, do you say? He was coming from the Bourse, I suppose?"

"That was my idea."

"He noticed you at once?"

"No, it was I who noticed him. I thought he was a good-looking fellow; there was nothing extraordinary in that. I went out alone so rarely and I was so continually shut up with Langlade, that all men seemed good-looking to me, little ones especially."

"The man we are talking about was undersized, then?"

"Medium height."

"What did you do afterwards?"

"I tried to attract his attention," said she naïvely.

"How?"

"In turning my head round to look at him as often as possible, stopping at all the shops, and lifting my dress to show a little bit of my foot—in short, I went through all the manœuvres that we women know so well."

"And they succeeded?"

"Yes, in a moment or two my unknown followed me. I then left the boulevard, went down the Rue de Choiseul and reached my own door. He came up, bowed very politely, and told me how pretty I was. I tried to blush and answered in the time-honoured phrase on such occasions. 'For whom do you take me, sir?' 'For a duchess, madam,' he replied smiling, 'and if you will permit me to make your acquaintancel'—I did not wish to

be too severe, so I gave him my name and at the same time permission to come and see me on the following day at an hour when I knew I should be free. He was punctual, but unfortunately Langlade, whom I believed to be doing something or other that day out of Paris, returned unexpectedly. You know the rest, as he has confessed everything to you."

"At what hour did Langlade return in search of you?"

"It must have been about nine o'clock," she replied.

"Did he merely say to you as he came in, 'I have killed your lover?'"

"Yes, that was all."

"What answer did you make to that?"

"None. He would have killed me that night as he had killed his other victim. He was beside himself; I never saw him so awful."

"His hands, no doubt, were stained with blood?"

"No, and I was surprised at it."

"It is not in any way remarkable," said

Vibert, "the blood does not always spirt out of a wound instantaneously, and Langlade fled after having committed the crime. Did you afterwards upbraid him with this assassination?"

"No, I did not dare," answered Soleil-Couchant, "I have already told you, sir, that I trembled like an aspen before that man."

"Did he ever mention the subject again?"

"Never."

"Do you remember the exact date when this took place?"

"It was about the end of October or the beginning of November."

"I asked you the exact date."

"I do not know, sir."

"But surely it was an epoch in your life!"

"Undoubtedly, but I have always lived a careless sort of life and have never bothered myself about the day of the month."

"Have you any better idea as to the name of the man who paid you the visit?"

"I never thought of asking him."

"Did not he tell you even his pet name?"

"I don't think so. At all events, if he did I don't remember it."

"Describe this young man to me as precisely as you can."

"He was of medium height, as I have already told you, dark complexioned, and he had a slight moustache."

She stopped, considered for a moment, and then replied—

"Upon my word that is all. I don't recollect anything more—just think, it is nearly three months ago!" she added, in the most natural way.

"Do you think he was married?" asked Vibert.

"Very probably he was, as, when he came into my room, he was by no means at his ease and seemed afraid of being seen."

"How was he dressed?"

"Like anybody else. I fancy he had on a dark overcoat."

"Just so," said Vibert. "Had he any occa-

sion, whilst he was with you, to take anything out of his pocket?"

"Yes, he took out his pocket book and wanted to give me a souvenir, as he said, but I refused. I am not a mercenary woman."

"What sort of a pocket book was it? Think well before you answer."

"I think," said Stéphanie, after a slight pause, "that it was not a regular pocket book. It was more like a—"

"Memorandum book?"

"Yes, that was it. One of those with an elastic band round them."

"Do you recollect the colour?"

"Oh, yes! it was red."

"Then there is no longer any room for doubt," said the detective. "The information is not quite complete, but it is precise as far as it goes."

"Are you satisfied with what I have told you?" she asked, timidly, trying to sidle nearer to Vibert.

"I satisfied?" he replied abruptly. "Not

in the least. Langlade's guilt is nothing to me, but from the very moment it is proved— Well, duty before everything !” he added, with a sigh.

He got up and said—

“I have nothing more to ask you now. My visit is at an end. Good-by.”

“What ! shall I not see you again ?”

“Perhaps. I don't know.”

She threw her arms round him, so that he could not withdraw himself from her embrace, and said, in a pleading voice—

“Do come back—please !”

“What a girl it is,” murmured Vibert, as he looked at her. “If I chose I could succeed Langlade ; I, Vibert, should have a mistress. Better so, perhaps !”

He took hold of her arms gently, drew them asunder and, holding her away from him, said to her—

“My sweet friend, prepare yourself to see your dear Langlade once more. Within half-an-hour he will be brought into the waiting room.”



This information had an effect like a shower-bath on Stéphanie, and she recoiled as she exclaimed—

“Swear to me that a grating shall separate us.”

“I swear it. Good-by,” and he opened the door.

“Good-by,” she answered, sadly.

When she was alone in her cell she began to toy with her hair once more, and thus she prepared to see her lover again.





## CHAPTER IX.

Two warders of the Conciergerie conducted Langlade to the waiting-room, which was then tenantless.

As it had been agreed between Vibert and the convict, the latter was no longer handcuffed. In appearance Langlade was as calm as ever. On the way from his cell to the waiting-room he had looked about him with an air of indifference, and had replied quietly to such questions as were put to him.

One of the warders, the younger of the two, said to his companion, pointing to the prisoner—

“He has been maligned ; he is a lamb.”

“We shall see ; there may be some fire among the embers,” replied the other, who was

an old hand at prison work and accustomed to these sudden fits of tranquillity, often noticed in the most powerful and violent subjects and followed, as a rule, by a reaction as terrible.

The old warder was not mistaken; the reaction was coming.

“By which door will she come in?” suddenly asked Langlade, who had seated himself in a corner, on one of the benches with which the room was furnished.

They showed him a door placed on the other side of the grating which divided the waiting-room into two parts. The convict raised his head—his teeth shut and his nostrils dilated. He was beginning to scent something wrong, and had a vague idea of a trap.

“If she comes in on that side,” he replied, and his voice had already lost some of its calm, “how will she be able to join me here?”

“She will not join you,” said the young warder.

“Ah! she will not join me!”

“You can go as close to the grating as you

please, and can talk to her without interruption," remarked the elder warder persuasively, for he saw that Langlade's features were becoming convulsed, and he wished to appease him.

"Then I have been deceived," cried the convict, bursting into a rage.

"The promise was that you should see her, and you are going to see her."

"I have been deceived, I tell you," he replied, still more violently. "She ought to be close to me—at my side. No grating should separate us. It is shameful! My good faith has been abused! If I had known I would not have given myself up—I would have defended myself. I would have killed him, the wretch! I would have killed all of you—scum that you are!"

He went quickly up to the older guardian, who, with his bunch of keys in his hand, awaited him without flinching.

"I want to be by her side," he exclaimed. "I want her either to be brought here, into this

part of the room, or I want myself to go over to the other side."

"My orders are precise," replied the warder.

"What you ask is impossible."

"It is impossible, is it?" shouted Langlade.

"Ah! I have not given myself up yet. You have not arrested me. Nothing has been done yet—we will begin again."

Without any apparent effort he wrenched from the wall a wooden bench which was fastened against it, seized a couple of stools, three straw-bottomed chairs and a small table, and threw them into a corner of the room. Then, tearing out one of the legs of the table to use as a club, he planted himself, with his back against the wall, behind the barrier he had thus made and, brandishing his club over his head, he roared at them to "come on!"

"Look out!" said the younger warder, making his way prudently towards the door, whilst his companion, one of those brave fellows taken from the Military Police, remained firmly at his post, and contented himself with

shrugging his shoulders and looking calmly at Langlade. His coolness completely exasperated the convict, and with one bound the latter leaped over his barricade and marched straight on the foe.

By this time the warder saw that he was exposing himself to needless danger, so, with his eyes fixed on his adversary, his bunch of keys held in one hand, so as to ward off the blows of the club, and stroking his grizzled moustache with the other, he backed quietly towards the door without a word or any call for help.

As soon as he got near the door, which had remained open since his companion's flight, he made one vigorous bound backwards, Langlade being all but upon him, and shut the door quickly after him.

Langlade was alone.

Whilst this was going on the soldiers on duty—for there is always a guard in each of the State prisons—stood to their arms and were marched towards the waiting-room.

It was evident that a terrible struggle was about to take place. The convict, in the end, would have to succumb to the force of numbers but not until after an obstinate resistance.

In his stalwart hands every sort of weapon was sure to be a deadly one. Moreover, there was nothing to hinder him throwing himself upon the first soldier who came in, wresting his musket from him, and keeping his enemies at bay from behind his barricade for a considerable time.

The soldiers, preceded by the two warders, had reached the door of the room and were on the point of entering, when Vibert appeared on the scene.

Just as he was leaving the Conciergerie, on his way to the Palais-de-Justice where he wished to speak to the magistrate M. Goubet, he heard an unusual disturbance and, on enquiry, was informed of what had been going on.

"I expected as much," said he to himself. "It is my fault, after all. Langlade has an

undoubted right to complain, seeing that I have not kept strictly to my promise. It is my business, perhaps, to repair the wrong I have done and to prevent any shedding of blood, even at the price of my own."

A brave and resolute man, such as we know him to be, could not hesitate long. He joined the soldiers and, placing himself before the door they were going to open, said—

"Don't go in. I will manage this affair myself."

"What are you going to do?" asked the old warder, who had by this time recognised Vibert.

"I don't know. But send away the soldiers, I beg of you. It is no use their rushing on certain death at the hands of this madman. I have cowed him once already this morning; perhaps I shall succeed again. There will always be time enough to summon the guard to our assistance, and you know very well that your chief will give you credit for having avoided any violent measures."



"Undoubtedly; our orders are to make use of gentle means as far as possible. But if you only knew what a state of rage that brute is in! You will never succeed with him."

"At all events it won't cost me anything to try."

"You risk your life."

"That is better than risking yours, as well as the lives of these brave fellows," replied Vibert.

"As you wish. Would you like me to go in with you?"

"No, my friend, it would be useless. The lion tamers never take any one with them into the wild beast's cage. It does not do to whet their appetite."

"Then I'll stay here and be at hand to render you assistance in case of need."

"Just as you like."

Vibert opened the door and went into the room.

Langlade, who had heard the sound of voices and the rattle of the arms, expected to be attacked and had retired behind his barricade.

As soon, however, as he saw Vibert his anger turned to downright rage.

With a single bound he was upon him. Seizing him in his arms, he threw Vibert from him with such force that he sent him flying ten yards off.

The detective fell on his knees, got up, wiped the dust off his trousers with his coat sleeve, for under the most trying circumstances he was neat and precise, and, without waiting for Langlade to make another rush at him, he went towards him and, folding his arms, said to him—

“You are a coward.”

“And you are a traitor!” exclaimed the convict.

“Why am I a traitor?” said Vibert, without lowering his voice.

“You promised that I should see her, and I see her not.”

“She is there, behind that door, and is only waiting for you to grow a little calmer before she comes in.”

"But I shall see her behind that grating. That is not what you promised—"

"I gave you no promise at all on that point. You dare to say that I promised you that she should be beside you!"

"We did not talk about it, but—"

"You should have made your conditions when we were talking about it. I cannot tell what you want by inspiration. As for my promises, I have kept them all religiously. You asked me to have your handcuffs taken off, and they have been taken off. I am a victim of my good-nature to you. If you had not had the use of your hands you could not have smashed everything in this room as you have done, nor could you have acted in such a cowardly way towards me."

"Cowardly!" repeated Langlade.

"Yes, cowardly! I am little, you are big; I am weak, you are strong; I come in here alone and unarmed, so as to prevent a bloody struggle in which you would have got the worst of it, and you rush on me like a wild beast. You

would have been a great deal better off, wouldn't you, if you had killed me and two or three of those poor devils who were only doing their duty—"

"Will Soleil-Couchant be brought here?" asked Langlade, calming down already. "Shall I see her without that grating between us?"

"No; you will see her and speak to her through it. It was she herself who begged that it might be so."

"Ah, it was she! Why?"

"No doubt, because she was afraid of being close to you, and no wonder."

"If she is afraid it is because she knows that she is guilty towards me."

"Evidently; but that is no reason why she should wish to be killed."

"And if I promise not to kill her?"

"You cannot answer for yourself; you are too violent. A word, a look, puts you in a perfect fury. You strike even those who have neither said nor done anything to you."

"Forgive me," said Langlade in a hollow voice.

“Oh, yes, I forgive you ; but the Governor of the Conciergerie may not forgive you for having disturbed the order which usually prevails here, for having been guilty of acts of violence, and for having caused the guard to be turned out.”

“What can he do to me ? ”

“He may pay no further attention to the request I made on your behalf,” replied Vibert adroitly, with the double object of dismaying Langlade and himself appearing as the dispenser of additional favours, “and he may deprive you of a sight of Soleil-Couchant, even behind that grating.”

“Oh ! ” exclaimed Langlade, who had never dreamt of this species of punishment, which had more terrors for him than double irons, a strait waistcoat and the black-hole, all put together.

“You see,” resumed Vibert, “what you gain by being violent. Indeed, by the fact of your being continually so, you have alienated the heart of Soleil-Couchant. She loved you once.”

"Yes," he repeated in a mournful tone, "she loved me."

"And now she fears you."

"Listen," said the convict, trying to get hold of Vibert's hand, "if you will obtain the Governor's permission for me to see her, I'll promise to put everything here in its place again, to make my excuses to the warders, and to be as quiet as I have been violent."

"I should like very much to make the trial, but first arrangements always hold good here, and nothing can change them. You must stay here, and Soleil-Couchant will come in on that side. Those are the orders."

"Well, so be it. I don't want her near me. My anger has passed off, and I no longer want to kill her."

"*Mon Dieu*, yes; it passed off on to me," observed Vibert. "My knees feel as if they were on fire, and the skin is peeled right off them."

"Shall I dress them?" asked the convict, good-naturedly.

"No, thanks ; I have no time to coddle myself. Come, put this place into some kind of order whilst I go to the Governor, and don't forget that it is your turn to keep your promise to me."

Vibert went out and found waiting at the door the warders, who were astonished at seeing him again safe and sound.

"He is quiet now," said he to them, "and if Soleil-Couchant does not provoke him too much he will continue so during the rest of the day. These excitable men are always given to paroxysms of violence. After the tempest comes a dead calm ; they have no proper medium. I beg of you," he continued, addressing the old warder, "to let him see his mistress as if nothing had happened. This evening he will be removed to another prison, and you will be rid of him. The table, which he has robbed of one of its legs, and myself, whose knees he has interfered with, are the only ones who have any real right to complain, and neither of us make any remonstrance."

A quarter of an hour later Soleil-Couchant,

in charge of one of the warders on her side of the prison, entered the waiting-room, and prudently took a seat as far as possible from the grating which separated her from her dear Langlade.

He, on the contrary, as soon as he saw her, went up to the grating, and, pressing his huge face against it, stood looking at his mistress. For a moment his look was menacing and full of hate, and then it softened. His eyes assumed a kind, almost tender expression. The species of magnetic influence which a woman one loves always possesses, had its effect on him. The convict uttered an empty boast when he swore to kill Soleil-Couchant. He would never have had the courage to do it. One look from his mistress would have stayed his hand on the very point of striking the blow. He said not a word, but continued to look at her, whilst she, expecting a storm of insult and reproach, was quite taken aback. She feared lest Langlade should be meditating some foul deed, and gazed about her with a terrified air, asking herself whether the grating,



against which he leant, would not fall suddenly, and open a way for him to get at her.

"You are afraid of me, then?" said Langlade, in a mild voice.

"*Dame!*" replied Soleil-Couchant, "I have every reason to be. You have given me cause enough since I knew you."

"You should not blame me for that," said he, sadly. "I have been jealous, violent, mad, only because I loved you."

"Yes, I know that speech by heart," she exclaimed, hotly. "When you men say to a woman, 'I love you,' you think you have said everything and can cry quits with her. The more you ill-use her, the more you make a martyr of her, the more she ought to rejoice. Your violence, your abuse, your blows, are so many proofs of love. *Pour Dieu!* love us a little less. We have only to fall in love once to make all our lives intolerable."

"So," said he, still in the same tone of voice, "you have been very unhappy with me?"

"Very unhappy. As you ask me, I am not afraid of telling you."

"Don't be afraid. Behind these bars I cannot be very formidable."

"In reality it is the first time I have been able to speak to you without having to tremble."

"Speak, then. Open out your heart to me. I am listening."

Any other woman than Soleil-Couchant would have been moved, perhaps, by this show of feeling. There was indeed something touching in the submissive and resigned attitude of this vigorous and energetic man, this indomitable being, this tyrant. But the qualities of the heart were not very strongly developed in Soleil-Couchant; one cannot have everything. Besides, as we have already said, she had for five years been nourishing a bitter hate against this man, of whom she had always been trying to rid herself but without success. She had to pay him out for a thousand scoffs, as many blows, and countless sufferings. He had at last given her an opportunity of revenge without exposing herself to terrible reprisals, and she was not the woman to deprive herself of this enjoyment.

She unbosomed herself, as Langlade had asked her to do, and displayed all her wounds. She did not forgive her lover one cause of complaint, nor a single reproach ; she cast in his teeth all her sorrows. In one hour she repaid him with interest all the insults she had received during the whole five years. She overwhelmed him with abuse, as he had overwhelmed her. Instead of blows, which she was powerless to strike, she pounded him with vituperation. It was a real, furious, armed revolt. The slave cast off his yoke, the helot broke his chains. In her capacity as a vindictive woman, and possibly as a red-haired girl, Soleil-Couchant was implacable.

He heard her out, without interruption, and when at length she stopped, he only said—

“Then you love me no longer?”

“I never have loved you!” she exclaimed.

“I feared you, and that is all.”

He lowered his head, and after a momentary silence, resumed—

“If I were to escape from prison, from the hulks, would you come back to me again?”

"Never!" she said, with intense energy. "Do not hope for it! Oh! it is all over, and well over. I never wish to live again as I have lived. I want to enjoy all that remains to me of youth and beauty, to have my fancies and indulge them, without fearing for my life. In a word, I want to be free."

Every one of these words struck Langlade to the heart, but he contented himself with saying—

"I have much to say to you, but I know not how to speak."

"You only know how to strike," said she, cruelly.

"Ah! I know how to suffer, too," was his reply.

His wonted high colour had disappeared, and he was deadly pale. Stéphanie saw it, was afraid, and shrank back. But he resumed; in the same mild voice—

"Then if I came back, as I have already done—?"

She interrupted him by exclaiming—

"You would never discover my retreat."

"This is the last time I shall see you?"

"Yes, the very last."

"In a few days you will be free. As for me, I shall be in prison. Will you never ask permission, from time to time, to spend a moment with me?"

"Never."

"And yet it was for your sake that I committed all my crimes. If I had never loved you, I should never have been sent to the hulks, nor should I go there again."

"There was no need for you to love me. I never asked you. On the contrary."

"And," he replied, still calmly, "if instead of being sent to the hulks, I should be condemned to die for the murder of that other one, you know, whom I killed because he was your lover, would you come and say a last adieu to me?"

"No," she said.

"Wretch!" cried he, suddenly.

He seized the grating with both hands and tried to break the bars. He could not succeed,

so then he attempted to force it out of its place with his knees, his feet, his head, even his teeth. He uttered the most savage cries, his eyes were bloodshot, and he foamed at the mouth.

Stéphanie's first impulse on this sudden outburst of fury was to recoil to the farthest extremity of the room. But when she saw that Langlade, despite his prodigious strength, was powerless even to bend a single one of the massive bars which separated him from her, she approached the grating again.

"Ah! you would crush me with pleasure, would you not?" she said, with a laugh. "You would kill me without a moment's pity. But I am out of your reach, and sheltered from your blows; you cannot do anything to me. I am no longer your plaything, no longer your dog. Come, giant of my heart, don't fatigue yourself so. You see well enough that you can't succeed; you are vanquished!"

This cruel piece of bravado, these biting sarcasms, so far from further exasperating Langlade, made him recover reason in a

moment. An instant before he would only have given utterance to inarticulate sounds and furious cries, but now he could speak. He let go his hold of the iron bars, crossed his arms and, casting an awful look on his mistress, he exclaimed—

“What ! do you dare to insult me ? You, who would be grovelling at my feet and asking for mercy, if this grating did not separate us ! And it is you whom I have loved, you who have brought me where I am ! It is for a wretched creature like you that I am going to the hulks for the third time, or, perhaps, to lay my head on the block ! And yet this tyrant, against whom you cry out, and whom you execrate—you might have softened him by a few kind words and a morsel of love. You have only made him a thief and a murderer ! You might have made a good man of him—yes, a good man ! What did I want to make me happy ? To see you, to feel you at my side, to breathe the same air with you. But you must have fine clothes, money, luxury ! The work of my hands was not enough for

you. I thieved to satisfy your caprices more quickly, to prevent you from leaving me and running into the arms of some other lover. Ah! those lovers! You talk of having more of them!" he continued, becoming furious again at the very thought of it. "Take care of them, take care of yourself! I will kill them as I killed the other one! Don't laugh, coward that you are! You think I am lost, and you brave me, but my turn may come yet. I shall know how to make use of it and to break your body as you have broken my heart! Yes, they may send me to the hulks; I will escape. They may put fetters on my hands and feet; I will break my bonds. They may send me to the scaffold; I will leap from it to rejoin you, and kill you!"

"Fool!" said Stéphanie, shrugging her shoulders. "You talk of breaking your fetters, and you cannot bend even a single one of the bars of that grating. You have imposed upon me. I thought you were strong, and you are not."

This last insult, this final lash, gave Langlade



superhuman strength and vigour. He took hold of one of the bars with both hands, gave it a fearful wrench, and the bar, yielding to this supreme effort, bent and gave way.

Soliet-Couchant uttered an agonizing scream.

One wrench more and Langlade would have reached her.

But there is a limit to human strength. Langlade had gone through too much since the morning, and had passed through stages of too cruel emotion. His blood, over-excited to a degree, mounted suddenly to his brain, he reeled all at once, his hold of the bar, which he had grasped, relaxed, and he fell heavily to the ground.





## CHAPTER X.

WHILST this scene was taking place at the Conciergerie, Vibert had bent his steps towards the Palais-de-Justice and had sent a message to M. Gourbet asking for an interview.

Cordier, the dried-up little man whom our readers may possibly remember and who occupied the post of registrar to M. Gourbet, came to see what Vibert wanted.

"I should like," said the police-agent, "to have an interview for a moment with the Magistrate on the subject of the assassination in the Rue de la Paix."

"Ah! you bring us some news," said Cordier, rubbing his hands.

"It is possible."

"Good news?"

"You will see."

"Just wait a few minutes. The Magistrate is engaged on important business, but as soon

as he is free I will tell him of your visit, and I have no doubt he will see you."

"I will wait," said Vibert.

The little man withdrew, gliding rather than walking, in the manner we have already described.

Then, half-an-hour afterwards, Vibert was shown into the Magistrate's office. The first words addressed to him by M. Gourbet were—

"Well, you bring the proofs. It is decidedly Savari?"

"No, sir," said Vibert, with a sigh, "he is not the man."

"How is that? You and Madame Vidal were so sure of your facts!"

"We made a mistake, sir."

"The last time I saw you here, in my office, you asserted that your conviction became stronger every day."

"It was true, but times have changed."

"You came, I believe, to me for permission to take away with you from the registry office one of the articles produced in evidence—the dagger with which the victim was stabbed?"

"It was given to me."

"Was not that enough to enable you to make a decisive experiment?"

"Yes, sir, and I made it."

"It did not succeed?"

"It succeeded, but imperfectly."

"Explain yourself, I beg."

"I mean to say that this experiment quite upset, I admit, my conviction; but subsequently, after mature reflection, I was surprised to find myself still believing in the guilt of Albert Savari."

"Was he not agitated when you showed him the dagger?"

"No, but that did not prove anything. In the height of a violent altercation, in a moment of anger and excitement, he might have laid hold of the first thing that came to his hand, but after stabbing Maurice Vidal he might have thrown the weapon away in terror and fled. It was, therefore, quite possible that the sight of the dagger did not at first arouse any reminiscences nor make any impression."

"But you are far too clever not to have

found an opportunity of mentioning in his hearing the name of the individual who was stabbed with this weapon ? ”

“ Yes, I spoke to him of Maurice Vidal.”

“ Well ? ”

“ He showed great sympathy for the sad fate of that young man, whom he had known. He shed tears over his death, and was sharp enough to mingle his tears with those of the widow.”

“ You say he was sharp enough ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Then, according to you, Albert Savari was enacting a part ? ”

“ No, sir, I was alluding to something else.”

“ You admit that these tears might possibly have been natural.”

“ Perfectly so.”

“ Do you think, then, that they were caused by remorse ? ”

“ Remorse also might have had something to do with them.”

“ All this is becoming more and more vague. You will admit that we are not a bit

nearer the end than we were three months ago."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I bring you the name of the murderer of Maurice Vidal."

"What do you say?"

"I know now the assassin of whom you are in search."

"Really?" exclaimed M. Gourbet.

"Yes, sir."

"And his name?"

"Langlade."

"Langlade—the name sounds familiar to me. Is not there a convict so called?"

"That is the man."

"I have had that fellow's case under my consideration. He escaped on the last occasion from the hulks at Brest. He has been for three months in Paris and the police cannot discover his hiding-place."

"His abode was discovered yesterday, and I arrested him this morning. He is, at the present time, in the Conciergerie."

"I must compliment you on his capture."

Vibert bowed.

"And," continued M. Gourbet, "it was Langlade who assassinated Maurice Vidal? What makes you think so?"

Vibert gave the Magistrate a detailed account of his arrest of the convict, and informed him of the particulars extracted from Soleil-Couchant.

"Yes," said M. Gourbet, when Vibert had finished his account, "we have found the culprit at last, thanks to your sagacity."

"Oh, sir," replied Vibert, "don't talk of my sagacity. On the contrary, it was at fault. Chance alone came to my aid."

"However that may be, you ought to be delighted at the result."

"No, sir, I am not."

"Because you suspected Savari, and were mistaken—a question of *amour-propre*."

"If it were only a question of my *amour-propre* I should be well out of it," murmured Vibert, so low that M. Gourbet did not hear him, "but it is a more serious case for me," he added with a sigh.

Whilst Vibert was indulging in this short

soliloquy, the Magistrate went up to the registrar and said—

“M. Cordier, will you kindly hand me the minutes of the examination of Albert Savari, in the month of October last. You should have a copy of them.”

“Yes, sir,” said the little man, gliding towards a collection of green portfolios arranged on shelves. He took hold of one without the least hesitation, opened it and took out a bundle of papers, which he handed to the Magistrate. An automaton could not have performed the duty with greater precision.

After looking over the papers attentively, M. Gourbet turned to Vibert and said—

“Langlade is guilty. We cannot entertain the least doubt on that point. But, nevertheless, see how easily justice may go astray. Many of the most conscientious and cautious of my colleagues would have found in these minutes, which I have just read over carefully, a dozen reasons to induce them to commit Savari for trial at the assizes. I will merely give you one. Can you account for the bills



given to Maurice Vidal being found in Savari's house ? ”

“ Yes,” said Vibert, “ if Savari had met them as he maintained he had.”

“ But it would appear from these minutes that he could not have met them. In the whole of his life he never had fifty thousand francs in his possession.”

“ Did he not state positively that he won them at various gambling tables in Germany ? ”

“ And you believe that ? ”

“ I believe in anything as regards gambling.”

“ Then you have no longer any suspicions as far as he is concerned ? ” asked M. Gourbet.

“ *Mon Dieu !* ” replied Vibert, “ I have a bad habit of succumbing to evidence. What interest could Langlade possibly have had in asserting that he had assassinated a man ? ”

“ But he did not mention the man by name.”

“ His mistress described him accurately enough.”

“Neither of them was precise as to the date of the crime?”

“Both of them fixed it within a very little.”

M. Gourbet reflected for a moment, and then said—

“And these words written by the victim in his blood, ‘The assassin’s name—.’ How do you account for them if Langlade did the deed? Maurice Vidal could not have known the convict.”

“That, I admit, is one of the most vital objections. I have already put that question to myself, and I think I have found the answer. Before he was sent to the hulks Langlade lived in Paris and was well known to all the young men of a certain clique. They did not shake him by the hand, it is true, nor did they recognise him when they met him in the street, nor did they even speak to him, because he was always decidedly vulgar. But they turned round to look at him, and asked who he was when he appeared in public with Soleil-Couchant. How, indeed, could such a couple have helped being noticed? On the one hand, a species of giant;

on the other, a strikingly handsome girl, with a brazen look and hair of an unusual colour. For the time being, Langlade became thus a sort of celebrity, and I remember that one evening at a first night at a theatre on the boulevards, one of the gods called out to him, 'Halloa, Langlade, where is your girl with the red hair?' It is not very astonishing, therefore, sir," concluded Vibert, "that Maurice Vidal was able to recognise his assassin and wanted to put justice on his track."

"Yes," replied the Magistrate, "your explanation is natural."

"Besides all this," added Vibert, "nothing is easier than to sum up the whole of this affair in two words. Was there anybody else assassinated in the Rue de la Paix in the month of November last? You know well enough that there was not; all the world knows it. In that case Langlade is guilty, and Savari is innocent. I see no way of getting out of that."

"I will not contradict you," replied M.

Gourbet, "but we have held to one belief so long that a little hesitation is allowable."

"You will hesitate no longer, sir, when you have examined Langlade and his mistress. The latter especially, because Langlade may possibly refuse to reply to your questions."

"Why?"

"Because he is not always the most manageable man in the world. Of that you will be able to convince yourself. Ah! Savari would have given you less trouble. I wish he was guilty for your sake, for the sake of the Public Prosecutor and of everybody engaged in the case, and," he added, in a lower tone with a sigh, "for my sake, too."

"So," said the Magistrate, getting up from his chair, as an intimation to Vibert that it was time for him to go, "you undoubtedly refuse to be consoled for your mistake with regard to Savari."

"I confess, sir, that I shall never console myself. It will be the misfortune of my whole life."

He bowed and retired.



## CHAPTER XI.

WHAT has become, during all this time, of Julia Vidal and Albert Savari, of whom the exigencies of our tale have compelled us to lose sight.

On the day following the dinner at the Café Anglais, Savari called, about three o'clock in the afternoon, at the Rue de Grammont.

"My mistress is unwell," Marietta informed him, "and is unable to see you."

After a persistent but ineffectual effort to gain admission, Savari hastened to the Hotel des Princes. He wanted, at all events, to talk about Julia, if he could not see her.

But the Count de Rubini, up to this time so agreeable and communicative and such a thoroughly good fellow, had become, since the previous evening, cold, ceremonious, and impassive. Instead of stringing long sentences

together by way of answer to the most trivial question, he spoke only in monosyllables and maintained an unbroken silence on the subject of his cousin's illness.

We know something of Vibert's state of mind about this time, and the abrupt change in his manner will not cause us any astonishment.

But Savari, who had not been initiated, as we have been, into the secret sufferings of his old comrade, was surprised and alarmed.

At the same time he cast about for the motives by which the Count might be actuated, and he imagined he had found them.

"The fifteen days' grace," he said to himself, "which he gave me for the liquidation of my card debt expired long ago. He, no doubt, thinks I take matters too easily, and the coldness with which he treats me is an indirect reproach and a tardy intimation that I have to settle with him."

From the moment that he conceived this idea, Savari devoted himself to the task of finding means to discharge his debt to the Count

de Rubini, who was in a position to use considerable influence towards keeping him apart from Madame Vidal.

In the meantime he had not the necessary fourteen thousand francs, and none of his acquaintances appeared disposed to lend him that sum.

Had it happened two months earlier, he would not have hesitated, but would have resorted to the gambling-table.

Had not play always been a species of career for him—his only career, indeed? “I want a hundred louis,” he would have said. “I have not got them. Where is there any play going on to-night?”

But now he hesitated. It was not that he was intimidated by his last loss; on the contrary, he thought that he was in a winning vein again. But he was under the influence of a species of transformation which, without his knowing it, had been gradually taking place in his life.

Since his love for Julia had sprung into being, life had appeared to him under a new

aspect; he regarded certain subjects from a more serious point of view; he was a more severe censor of himself, and the words delicacy and honourable conduct, about which his views up to this time had been rather vague, began to have some meaning for him. In a word, he confessed to himself that it was a sorry thing to rely upon gambling for that which work alone should give him.

There is no doubt that if, when he was in this frame of mind, he had found some recognised and honest means of gaining fourteen thousand francs in a short time, he would not have hesitated to make use of them.

Unfortunately, these means are of rare occurrence; so Savari, after—to his credit be it said—some moral hesitation and great repugnance, found himself reduced one evening to pay a visit to Pélagie d'Ermont.

“She never requires to be asked,” he reflected, “to organise a *partie*. It is quite possible that at this very moment some bank or other is in full swing at her house. I have five-and-twenty louis; I have not played for a



long time, and I am unlucky in love—all excellent reasons for an unexampled run of good fortune at cards.”

Reasoning with himself in this way, he knocked at the door of Pélagie’s house.

Madame d’Ermont herself opened the door.

“Ah ! it is you,” said she, holding out her hand, and ushering him into the drawing-room. “It is kind of you to come and see me. You are not like the rest. You do not desert your friends when they are in misfortune.”

“You in misfortune, my fair one ! And how so ?”

“What, you do not know what has happened to me ?” asked Pélagie quickly.

“I have not the slightest idea. I have not seen any one belonging to our set for some time.”

“Don’t you read the papers ?”

“The papers ! What would they have taught me about you ?”

“That the police made a descent on my house last week.”

“Nonsense.”

"It is as I say."

"But what for? Had you, without our knowing it, a manufactory of base coin?"

"I allowed gambling."

"The devil! So these gentlemen of the police came here?"

"Just in the very height of a splendid bank at baccarat. There were on the table more than ten thousand francs in gold and notes."

"They were in the nick of time, then. No one had pocketed the money."

"Worse luck, no one had. So they seized it."

"That was rude."

"If they had only contented themselves with laying hands on the money!" replied Madame d'Ermont. "They compelled everybody in the house to give their names, addresses, and occupations in full."

"As regards the occupations," remarked Savari, "that would not be a very long business."

"It is all very well to make merry over it, but you don't know that they seized my furniture, too."

"That accounts for it!" exclaimed Savari, looking round him without any show of sympathy. "I was saying to myself that you had set up a new establishment."

"It is all second-hand furniture, which I was obliged to buy yesterday."

"Well," replied Savari, "but had they any right to seize the furniture?"

"*Mon Dieu!* Yes; the law is precise on that point," said Pélagie, sighing. "My solicitor gave me the Clause to read—Clause 410 of the Penal Code. I know it almost by heart—'All stakes which shall be found on the gaming-tables, and all furniture and moveable effects with which the rooms may be furnished or ornamented, shall be confiscated.'"

"Verily," said Savari, endeavouring to look concerned, "the law is no respecter even of the most sacred things."

"And even if that were all!" continued Madame d'Ermont.

"The catalogue is not exhausted yet?"

"There is another paragraph yet. I know it even better than the other one." This time

a deeper sigh still accompanied the remark.  
“ ‘ Every person who shall have kept a gambling-house shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not less than two and not exceeding six months, and to a fine of from a hundred to six thousand francs.’ ”

“ You did not keep a gambling-house,” observed Savari.

“ One is held to keep a gambling-house, so my solicitor tells me, when it can be proved that play is carried on in a regular fashion even in a private residence.”

“ When a business is made of it, which was not your case.”

“ They looked on the purse, which used to be made for me, in the light of a speculation.”

“ That is downright malevolence.”

“ Say rather that it is flagrant injustice. Was it not natural for each of you to contribute to my expenses ? ”

“ Quite so.”

“ Candles are dear, and you used plenty of them.”

“ About five or six francs per evening,” said

Savari to himself, as he remembered that his share of the purse came to three or four hundred francs. "My dear friend, I cannot tell you how deeply I sympathise with you."

"Finally," continued Madame d'Ermont, "I have to tell you that I am to have the pleasure of paying a visit to the House of Correction in eight days' time. If I am not in prison now, it is simply because some of my influential friends procured a few days' grace for me. But I shall certainly be condemned, and most probably in the full penalty. Now you know my situation—what have you to say about it?"

"I say that it is distressing."

"It is heartrending," said Pélagie, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

Savari did not see the use of taking any notice of this emotion, and resumed the conversation—

"How came the police to pay you a visit? You must have been betrayed."

"Undoubtedly, but I do not know the name of the traitor."

"You never received any but the regular *habitués* of your house and your friends?"

"Lately, more especially, not a single stranger has come here. There is only that Italian you are so much with—you know who I mean?"

"The Count de Rubini?"

"Yes, that is the man."

"He has never had an idea of denouncing you; he won too much money here. Such ideas as those are only thought of by gamblers who have lost considerably and wish for revenge. Besides, I know the Count de Rubini intimately by this time. He is an original certainly, but a thorough gentleman."

"Then," said Pélagic, "I must have been sold by one of those girls."

"Probably; your purse we were talking about roused some petty female spite, and out of that has come an anonymous communication to the Prefecture. Any other supposition is impossible, unless," he added, smiling, "some police agents have insinuated themselves amongst us."

After having sympathized for some time longer with Pélagie d'Ermont, Savari took his leave. From the moment that no gambling was to be done under her auspices, she became useless to him.

Savari's five-and-twenty louis did not increase. He did not know any other house such as Pélagie's, and, in addition to this, as soon as the police make a descent on one of these establishments, all the remainder of the same class are hermetically closed for a season. Every child knows that.

As for paying a visit to Baden or Homburg to try his fortune there, Savari never dreamt of it. He had not the courage to put one or two hundred leagues between himself and Julia, to say nothing of the fact that his five-and-twenty louis would barely cover the cost of his journey. He resigned himself, therefore, seeing that he could not do otherwise, to remain the Count's debtor, but he thought it his duty, nevertheless, to mention his debt, and to apologize for the delay which had occurred

with regard to it. Vibert, more and more morose, refused to see him.

Savari was completely disheartened ; he did not know what to think. The two persons with whom alone he had spent the last two months of his life failed him together, without his knowing anything of the cause which led to his separation from them. Julia had chosen the day following that on which he had declared his love as the time to shut her door against him. Nevertheless, she had heard him in silence, had almost encouraged him to speak. She might even have answered, if it had not been for the inopportune entrance of Vibert. And now, just as hope was dawning upon him, she abruptly, and without a word of explanation, placed a barrier between herself and him.

Like an uneasy spirit, he wandered about Paris, passing by preference along the Rue de Grammont at every opportunity. One day when, as was his wont, he raised his eyes towards Madame Vidal's windows, he caught sight of her behind the curtains. Thereupon



he lost his head completely, and all his former boldness came back to him. He ran rapidly across the street, rushed up the two flights of stairs, pushed aside Marietta, who made a futile attempt to stop him, went into the drawing-room, and found himself face to face with Julia.

This happened on the day after the arrest of Langlade and Vibert's visit to the judge.





## CHAPTER XII,

As soon as she saw Savari, Madame Vidal went quickly to meet him, no doubt to reproach him for having thus forcibly effected an entrance into her house and her presence against her orders. But he did not give her time to speak. Seizing both her hands before Julia could withdraw herself from his grasp, he poured into her ear a tale of love such as only the most violent and unrestrained passion could dictate.

“I no longer live,” he exclaimed, “except by and for you. Without you I shall kill myself! Life has become odious to me. My life has been a failure, I am a useless being, vicious, corrupt—I am horrified at myself. Have pity on me; you can make a new man of me. A look from you would make me better; a kind word, a smile, some encour-

agement, would give me all those virtues which I now have not. A week passed without seeing you is a century, an age ! If you but knew what I have suffered during that time. Even just now, before I saw you at the window, my strength and my courage were alike deserting me. I thought I had made up my mind to a violent end. Yes, it is so difficult to live when one is unhappy, so easy to kill oneself ! I was pale, was I not ? I ought to have inspired some pity in you ! But you were deaf to me, you heeded not when I unfolded my griefs to you, when I laid bare my every thought. Hear me, for pity's sake, hear me ! I am in earnest, I assure you. What interest could I have in deceiving you ? I swear to you I am in earnest. I suffer, suffer much, and a man who suffers as I do, who weeps as I am doing now, deserves to be accepted if only in pity ! ”

He stopped, for tears choked his utterance. Julia was amazed at this language, so entirely new to her. Her husband had spoken to her in the language of love, but words of passion she now heard for the first time.

Savari continued —

“ If you were determined to estrange yourself from me so quickly, why did you receive me in the first instance ? Why did you make me welcome ? Did you not see that little by little I was becoming enslaved by you ? Did you not read in my eyes that I loved you ? Ah ! a woman is never deceived in such things as these. She needs not that a man should go on his knees, and cry, ‘ I love you,’ to feel that she is beloved. You knew that my heart belonged to me no more. I gave it to you, and you by your silence accepted the gift. Nay, do not exclaim that it is not so ; you accepted it, I say, and you have no right, for the sake of a mere caprice, to make a martyr of me. What evil have I done you ? What fault have I committed with regard to you ? None ; I may then say to you, you are either in the wrong before me to-day, or you have heretofore acted wrongly.”

“ I have been wrong,” she said in her sweet voice.

At that moment she was true and sincere. When convinced of the guilt of Savari, subdued by Vibert's influence, and at the same time believing herself to be accomplishing a sacred duty, she had consented to enact a comedy unworthy of her, and repugnant to her loyal, straightforward and honest nature. By degrees she became blind to the danger and the odious side of her undertaking; enthusiastic in all she undertook, she at last came to play her part in very earnest. But for some time her convictions had been shaken, and she began to doubt Savari's guilt. She confessed to herself that if he were not guilty, the part she had been playing was detestable. He had every right to complain, to accuse her of, and reproach her for his sufferings. More than that, had she not some wrongs committed towards him to atone for?

Whilst these thoughts coursed rapidly through Julia's brain, Savari was also plunged in reflection. A man really in love is never very intelligent with the woman he loves. His subtlety and his habitual presence of mind are of

no avail to him. He commits himself at every turn in the most blundering manner, is guilty himself of unpardonable mistakes, and fails to profit by those of his adversary. Savari, up to this time renowned for his talent for intrigue, could, when face to face with Julia, no longer sustain his old reputation. Not that he was without his lucid moments, when the clouds which obscured his vision suddenly disappeared and he saw clearly and justly. Then he would say to himself, that a blow should be struck here or there, and he would become shrewd again for a moment, until the sky was once more overcast.

“I have been wrong,” Julia had said. Then she was melting, she must be touched. The eloquence of Savari had produced an impression on her mind, if not on her heart. It was one step in advance, a small one truly, but with it he had to content himself, and by it he must profit as quickly as possible. It was especially important that Julia, after having advanced, should not have reason to retrace her

steps. Savari was bound not to alarm her by excessive precipitation.

So, rendered more calm and self-possessed by the advantage he thought he had gained, he spoke no more in the language of passion, for fear of alarming Julia. He sat down beside her, and tried to persuade her that she could not shut her door against him, and that she ought to see him from time to time, for the purpose of gradually healing the wound from which he suffered.

"Humour me a little," said he, "treat me as an invalid, as a convalescent, and I shall regain my health?"

That was the only language to be used to a woman like Julia, and in different circumstances she would certainly have been persuaded by it, only she found herself in an exceptional position. She was no longer sufficiently convinced of Savari's guilt to continue playing the part she had taken on herself. That enterprise she put away from her, she declined all complicity with Vibert and cancelled whatever engagement she had

contracted with Justice and the Magistrate. But, at the same time, she was not sufficiently convinced of the innocence of Savari to sign the treaty which he laid before her. From the very moment that the cloud of suspicion lowered over him, all she had to do was to shut him out from all intimacy with her. Neither argument, nor prayer on his part could touch her. Her heart would be insensible to his most crafty pleading. The present and the future belonged not to her, so long as the darkness which enveloped the past was not dissipated.

She mustered all her courage, and approaching Savari, said to him—

“If you love me, as you assure me you do, if you have any respect for your love, for me, leave me, I beg of you, and do not seek to see me again.”

“And,” he exclaimed in despair, “is that all you can find to say to me?”

“Believe me—I cannot reply to you in any other terms.”



"But you are breaking my heart."

"Alas!" said she tenderly, "it is not my fault."

"At least," he replied, with tears in his voice, "tell me the reason of this coldness, this harsh treatment."

"No, that is impossible; I swear to you that it is impossible."

"This is the acme of suffering—this is too much," exclaimed Savari, as he sank on a sofa and covered his face with his hands, as if to repress the grief which was ready to burst out.

At this moment Marietta entered the room and going up to Madame Vidal, whispered in her ear—

"You are wanted."

"By whom?"

"By a person whom I do not know, but whose business seems important."

Julia rose and, without looking at Savari, who for his part did not turn his head towards her, followed Marietta into the ante-room. There she found one of the messengers of the Palais-de-Justice.

“Madame,” said the man, “M. Gourbet, the magistrate, charged me to deliver this letter into your hands alone.”

“Give it me,” said she.

She took the letter, and whilst Marietta was showing the messenger out, she re-entered the drawing-room, went to a window and read as follows—

“MADAME,

“It is my duty to inform you, without delay, that we have discovered the assassin of your husband. It is a man named Langlade, an escaped convict. We have against him proofs convincing enough to remove any possibility of doubt. Moreover, he has confessed. All the suspicion which you have conceived with regard to Albert Savari should therefore disappear. The surveillance to which he is still subjected will cease from to-day.

“I have sympathized with you, madame, in your most natural sorrow, and I am happy to inform you that at length the death of your husband will be speedily avenged.

"I have the honour to be, madame, with the utmost consideration,

"Yours very faithfully,

"(signed) GOURBET."

She read this letter over twice, to convince herself that she was not mistaken, and then went to the fireplace, threw the paper in the flames, and approached Savari.

He raised his head and looked at her as she came towards him, without comprehending her intention.

When she was close to him, she said in a low, sweet voice—

"I have caused you much suffering. Forgive me, and never ask me for an explanation of my past conduct. I have many wrongs towards you to atone for, and I will atone for them."

The words were scarce spoken, when she burst into tears.



### CHAPTER XIII.

A LARGE chariot, emblazoned with a coat of arms and drawn by two powerful Norman horses, pulled up with a tremendous clatter one morning in front of the entrance to the Hotel des Princes. As soon as it stopped, a footman briskly descended from his lofty seat by the side of the coachman, and ran to receive the orders of the individual who was seated in the vehicle.

“Try to find out from the waiters,” said this individual, “if the Count de Rubini lives here, and if he is in now.”

The footman promptly executed this order, and brought back the intelligence that the Count resided there, and that nobody had seen him go out.

“Open the door, then, and assist me to alight,” said the proprietor of the carriage.

"Did you ascertain the number of his room?" he added as he crossed the courtyard.

"Yes, my lord. It is No. 4, on the second floor."

"The second floor? The devil! It is rather high up for me this morning. I think I have another attack of this infernal gout coming on. Ah, here we are, at last."

"This is the door, my lord."

"Open it then, instead of keeping me standing here, as if you thought I was feeling comfortable after all this climbing. Now, go. I will come down again by myself."

Vibert, seated in front of the fire-place, was poking the fire when the door opened. He turned his head, uttered a cry of surprise, and then rose hurriedly and went to meet his visitor.

"You, my lord Marquis!" he exclaimed, "you here in my rooms?"

"Yes, I myself in your rooms. Is there anything wonderful in that? Do you not call yourself the Count de Rubini? Consequently there is nothing derogatory on my

part. Moderate your amazement, and give me a chair. These flights of stairs are no joke !”

The Marquis de X—, whose acquaintance we have up to this time made solely through the medium of his correspondence with Vibert, bore his sixty-five years well. He had a countenance of remarkable intelligence, thin lips, and whiskers trimmed after the English fashion. A reminiscence of his service in the Royal body-guard lingered in his figure, which was as erect as a slight stoop would allow it to be. He dressed in a style peculiar to himself. His waistcoat was extremely long, and buttoned down to the hips; his shirt collars were very high, and his black dress coat (he wore a dress coat on all occasions) was of a peculiar cut. His trousers, ample in their dimensions, were tight round the ankle, hussar fashion. From 1835 to 1848, the Marquis de X— was the spoiled child of the Upper Chamber. His sallies and freaks are still remembered and may be heard of in all Parisian drawing-rooms. He was the only peer of France who had any amount of popularity. His speeches were

picked out and learnt by heart, and the reports of parliamentary debates were only read if the witty marquis had been amongst the speakers. He spoke frequently, to the great delight of his colleagues, who listened to him with extreme pleasure though they occasionally interrupted him as a matter of form. In the most sudden and unexpected manner he would get on his legs, and plunging his hands into the capacious pockets of his waistcoat, would broach the first question on the orders of the day.

"But, M. de X—, why do you address the House without permission?" the President would ask.

"Sir," would be the trenchant reply, "if I had that permission, I should not be obliged to take it."

"M. de X—, allow me to call your attention to the subject before the House. You have been talking for an hour about England, and England is not under discussion."

"Sir," would say the Marquis, as cool as ever, "my love for the English does not put all else out of my head, as you know full well.

If I speak of them, it is simply because they are mixed up in every question."

"But not in the present one."

"Pardon me, sir, I have found a way to connect them with it."

In spite of all these interruptions, he would go on for a full hour speaking in his pleasing and ornate style, bringing England to bear upon every subject, and working out ever fresh theories in the most charming way.

When the Marquis de X— was comfortably seated in his chair, he turned towards Vibert, and said to him—

"So you thought you could quickly suppress my daily *feuilleton* without my rebelling or coming down upon you for the rest of the series? For a month past, according to our agreement, you sent me my eight columns every morning in time for breakfast; you kept me informed of the minutest details of the Rue de la Paix affair; you posted me up in all the sayings and doings of the fair Julia Vidal, and that prepossessing adventurer called Savari. You announced for the next day a



thrilling dagger scene at the Café Anglais. The interest was becoming intense, when presto, no more *feuilleton*, no more tale, no more anything. Your 'sequel in our next' was merely a catch, and you were making fun of your devoted reader—"

"If you only knew, my lord," said Vibert sadly.

"Good heavens! If I knew I should not be asking you for anything more. Come, what have you done with all your characters? I love them all! Your Julia does not speak much—it is but just to her to admit that—but she has plenty of nerve. Your Savari is an attractive production of the corrupt society around us; he pleases me, does that blackguard. Give me news of all of them."

"That is out of my power, my lord, seeing that for the past week I have not set eyes on any of the persons you allude to."

"Now you want to impose upon me!" exclaimed the Marquis, "and your profession, what of that?"

"My profession consisted of a search after a

culprit. I have sought him out, and I have found him."

"Caught is he, the scoundrel? It is just a little too soon."

"You evidently imagine, my lord, that I am alluding to Savari?"

"Clearly."

"That is a mistake; Savari is not the guilty party."

Then Vibert narrated to the Marquis de X— all that we know with regard to Langlade and Soleil-Couchant. His account, far from interesting that nobleman, appeared to put him in a shocking bad humour.

"Here's a nice wind-up!" said he, when Vibert had ceased speaking. "The assassin is merely a convict—the crime is a vulgar one committed by a low hound—enough to make one shudder—you deserve to be discharged! This was an affair which really promised to be somewhat out of the common—a pretty woman, a handsome fellow, love in immediate prospect; a picturesque situation, in fact. And this taking romance is to end in the most ordinary

fashion! Savari and Julia will return to their usual avocation, and there will be nothing but one clumsy fellow more on the hulks. It is only fit for tradespeople! In it I recognise the age we live in! Yes, we are indeed in the reign of cotton!"

Then, directing his conversation to Vibert, he resumed—

"But, if all is over and done with, if your assassin is in durance vile and Savari is as white as snow, why do you still appear as the Count de Rubini, live in this fashionable hotel, and wear clothes that put mine in the shade? Have we by chance made a fortune, or have we, at all events, found a real ancestor or two?"

"*Mon Dieu!* my lord," said Vibert, slightly put out, "I am wearing out my clothes and finishing up the fortnight I have broken into at the hotel."

"And, my small *protégé*, you really expect me to credit such nonsense? You wearing your grand clothes without any object! You had a thousand times rather sell them to an old clothes man! You stopping to complete a fort-

night in a suite of rooms which must in your eyes be the height of extravagance ! Absurd ! In the first place, the rooms here are let by the day ; in the second, the proprietor of the hotel, I would stake my right hand on it, only asks to see your back. I know you ; it would be a hard task to make you spend money. A dozen old fogies of your stamp would ruin a place like this. My dear Vibert, you have other motives for remaining here, and I will tell you what they are if you make a point of it."

"But, my lord—"

"You don't insist on it ? You know full well that, cunning as you are, I have already found them out."

"Oh, I am not cunning with you, my lord."

"And you are right, brave boy," said M. de X—, going close up to Vibert, and taking him by the ear. "Come," he continued, in a semi-fatherlike way, "tell me your troubles ; that will comfort you. To whom should you tell them, if not to me ? You have neither relation, friend, nor mistress. You are entirely

thrown back upon yourself, and if you have anything to worry you, it would affect you more than other people."

"Yes, that is true," said Vibert, with a sigh.

"You see I am right in my conjectures. I will set you the example of being frank. I have not been drawn hither by a feeling of curiosity alone, but rather by a desire to bring you some consolation in your distress. Have I not seen by your letters the gradual increase of the cause of your present suffering? Have I not divined the reason why you, formerly so outspoken, are now so reticent? You know very well that I take a lively interest in you. I like your turn of wit, your courage, your piquant originality. You are not like the rest of the world. Under the old *régime* you might eventually have been a Louvois, a Richelieu, or a Mazarin. In our day, to turn your qualifications to some advantage you enter the police force, and there you are right. It is, perhaps, a more sensible calling than others. I am not a man to have stupid prejudices, I only have convictions. Now then, let me

hear what you have to say, or I shall never have done. I am in a talking vein this morning. There has not been a sitting of Parliament for two days, and I am in full force."

"What am I to say, my lord, unless it is that I am deeply moved—"

"Enough, do not let us enter upon a chapter of gratitude. You have simply to confess why you remain in this hotel, or, rather, I am going to tell you why it is. You continue to call yourself the Count de Rubini, to dress like a gentleman, and to live here, because it appears to you that, by returning to the Rue l'Arbre Sec and becoming Vibert once more, you will be placing a still greater gulf between her and you. Have I hit it?"

"Yes," replied Vibert concisely.

"You love her deeply, then?"

"Ah, yes, I love her!" exclaimed Vibert. suddenly, "I love her with all the warmth of a heart hitherto untouched, of an imagination up to this time restrained, of a temperament ignorant of its own existence and waking up to that knowledge. I have not worn out my

heart; I have not exposed it to every passer-by; I have not dragged it through every mire-heap, nor sullied it by indiscriminate touch. Nowoman I have met with up till now has made it beat one whit faster; as they have passed, I have turned my head aside. But she! she appeared before me, and I was transformed. My blood has a warmer flow, my nervous system is developed. Sudden fires mount to my brain. A species of spontaneous combustion is set up within me, all the more violent since it is late in coming. Yes, at thirty-five I am just beginning to live, and at last I have all the passions of a man. But these passions I must stifle! She who has caused their birth can neither comprehend nor excuse them. Ah! if you but knew the sufferings comprised in this confession—‘At last I have found the woman I have been waiting for; she is here, close to me; I see her, but I cannot touch her.’ And yet she is a woman as other women are, better and more beautiful than the rest, but made after their likeness; a woman in every acceptance of the word, ready to respond if one only

could touch the right chord. She is no statue, no stone, no idol—she is a true woman. But I—I am not a man like other men ; I am cast in that mould which makes others ask when they see me if I was born out of time : I am taken for a higher species of ape. The ladies of ancient Rome, who took their bath before their slaves, would have treated me with like indifference ! ”

“ You should not at this early stage be so much to be pitied,” said the Marquis de X—, who was anxious to make the aspect of affairs more enlivening.

“ You think so, my lord. I should like to see you in a similar situation.”

“ Me, too ? ”

“ There is no punishment to be named in the same breath with mine,” continued Vibert, without noticing this last interruption. “ Tantalus himself, whom everybody pities, was the happiest of men in comparison with me. He suffered hunger and thirst ; I feel those pangs, too. He longed to taste the fruit which hung over his head, and it eluded his grasp ; I long



to taste love, and love flies from my call, even when I cry, 'Come, I am conquered by thee.'"

Vibert found a sort of bitter pleasure in thus exposing all his sores and in saying—

"Here is the wound which pains me, there I bleed, this is the torture which racks me."

He exaggerated his infirmities, he made himself more diminutive than he was, uglier and more mis-shapen. He took a pride in lowering and depreciating himself. Did he hope the Marquis would take him by the hand and lift him out of the mire in which he appeared to revel? Or was it rather that he wished to persuade himself that between him and Madame Vidal there was an impassable abyss, and that it was useless to struggle and suffer any longer?

The Marquis heard him attentively. He felt himself rejuvenated in the presence of this man, more ardent and impassioned than, in these times, one is at twenty years of age. It was a pleasure to him, living in a world of officialism, stiff, starched, grave, cold by disposition and set purpose, to find himself side

by side with a fervent, earnest being. His limbs, on which age had placed its icy hand, warmed by degrees in this room at the Hotel des Princes, and he found himself wondering whether a chill would strike him afresh when he entered the Upper Chamber once more. Besides this, he had a certain regard for Vibert. Some far off reminiscence, some mysterious bond of union, perhaps, united the grandee, the millionaire, the peer of France, to the diminutive servant of the Prefecture. The Marquis suffered in seeing his *protégé* suffer, and he wished to apply healing to his wounds.

“I am not,” said he, “a giver of advice, a blockhead and a dotard, as my age would seem to show. I am not going to tell you that you must conquer your passions and forbid your heart to beat ; I know very well that you would ask nothing better. Neither will I indulge you with hopes which might be dangerous, and in which I have no faith. It would in reality be a difficult matter for Madame Vidal to love you, not because of those imperfections which you exaggerate to such an extent, but by

reason of your position towards her. She has not been accustomed to look on you as a man ; for her you have been a means, an agent, a thing. If there were no other obstacle than your physical formation I should have some hope. Women are better than we are. We have but one idea—to know if they are lovely. They often seek after our moral qualities, and are taken with the hidden nature rather than the outside form. We are always more or less materialists, they are spiritualistic. But a woman such as the one you dote upon would not be withheld even by certain moral defects. She would fall in love with a great criminal if her imagination was fervent and depraved, but she would never take to a commonplace man, who moved in a set inferior to her own and whose occupation was more or less disapproved of in society.”

The Marquis had, for the time being, forgotten his gout. He got up, took Vibert by the arm, and forcing him to walk up and down the room with him, he continued in these terms—

“You see, I speak frankly to you, harshly,

perhaps, as is my duty and my right. But I can afford you some consolation. What is it that causes the suffering in love? It is when one has to say to oneself—‘This woman whom I long for so ardently belongs to another; not only can I not make myself beloved but she adores him.’ Nothing of the sort is the case with Madame Vidal. Entirely devoted to the memory of her husband, her heart is insensible to every seduction.”

Vibert stopped short, let fall the arm on which the Marquis was leaning, and said abruptly—

“You wish to make me speak out, do you not?”

“I?” said the Marquis in astonishment.

“You said to yourself—‘Let me put my finger on this fresh wound and he will show it me, as he has done the rest.’”

“Be that thought far from me, my friend. To what wound do you allude?”

“To that which has made me suffer more cruelly than all. I thought that you had divined it. Forgive me, I am mistaken.”

"I forgive you. But finish your revelation. A half confession is of no use; all your sorrows belong to me."

"I am jealous my lord," exclaimed Vibert, "frantic with jealousy."

"And of whom?"

"Of Savari."

"Of Savari! Does she love him?"

"She will love him."

"Impossible! What induces you to think so?"

"Everything, my lord, everything. You do not know this fellow Savari. He is tall, he is handsome, he is elegant, he is *distingué*. He talks with ease. He is shrewd and cunning. I know all his accomplishments. I have, as it were, been on the watch for them, and I assure you that such a man would invariably succeed in pleasing if he set his mind on it."

"But she ought to hate him—was he not in her eyes the assassin of her husband?"

"He is so no longer."

"The transition from hate to love is not so rapid as all that."

"There I differ from you, my lord, and you know very well that I am right. It is precisely from hate that people do pass to love. There is a proverb to that effect, which I will spare you. If Savari had been in her eyes an ordinary mortal you would be right. A woman does not fall suddenly in love with a man of whom for a long time she has taken no notice. You see, as you said yourself very justly, I have no chance. He has enough and to spare. Reflect for a moment that she has been fearfully unjust towards him ; she has suspected him of an awful crime. Now she will be anxious to repair the wrong, and it is impossible to say to what lengths a woman will go with that idea in her head."

"Have it so. I give in," replied the Marquis de X——, "but you forget, my dear Vibert, that Madame Vidal is a good woman, who loved her husband and will long remain faithful to his memory."

"That is the mistake you make, my lord ; Madame Vidal never loved her husband."

“What are you talking about?”

“What I have learnt to doubt no longer. Am I not observant by profession as well as by nature? She was living at Genoa in the midst of her family when Maurice Vidal appeared, saw her, and asked her hand in marriage. She consented to marry him, because the match was a good one, because she wanted to live in Paris, the dream of all foreigners, and because, in a word, the first man who makes love to a girl has always a very good chance of being accepted. She took for love what, commencing in a mere feeling of curiosity, grew into a genuine attachment. As for love, in the true sense of the word, her husband, like all of his class, never thought of inspiring her with it. Maurice Vidal, as a man of common sense, would, moreover, have thought it dangerous to excite an imagination already too lively. Possibly he never gave it a thought; of a somewhat cold, hard nature, he knew how to love wisely and after a thoroughly respectable fashion, but of the wilder phases of the passion he was in

utter ignorance. He only demanded from his wife what it was perfectly in her power to give him—thorough devotion, genuine attachment, and tender fondness.”

“How, then, do you account,” replied the Marquis, “for the violent despair exhibited by Madame Vidal on her husband’s death, and that fervid elevation of spirit which you noticed so particularly in her own house?”

“I have never denied that Madame Vidal was as you describe her. I merely say that she has been kept in a state of repression, and when Maurice Vidal died all her depth of feeling, so long kept under, was merged into a desire for vengeance. Now, tired of searching for a murderer she cannot find, she gives up her revenge. But her natural excitement must find a vent, and here Savari steps in.”

After a short interval of silence on both sides, the Marquis said to Vibert—

“What do you think of doing now?”

“I have not an idea. I think of suffering—it is an absorbing occupation.”



"Do you intend to remain in these rooms?"

"Yes, so long as I have a little money at command."

"Shall you make an attempt to see Madame Vidal again?"

"See her again! Oh, yes. Speak to her—no. What is the use? She needs my services no longer."

"I do not understand you. How can you see her again without speaking to her? Will you throw yourself in her way, will you—"

"No," said Vibert, interrupting the Marquis "I shall go to her house."

"Well?"

"I can see her without being seen by her, without her having the slightest suspicion of my presence near her. The day I hired a lodging for her I reserved a hiding place for myself. Yes, I have my little cell in the Rue de Grammont just as Esmeralda's lover had his in Notre-Dame."

"You never forget anything."

"I thought then of surprising Savari's confidences. I think now—"

He stopped.

“Go on,” said the Marquis, affectionately.

“Of feeding on their love!” concluded Vibert. “Is not that my destiny? Can I live on my own account? Am I not compelled always to live in the life of others?”

“What! you will have courage—?”

“Yes, listen. The drawing-room occupied by Madame Vidal communicates directly, on the one hand, with the bedroom and ante-room. But at the end of it, on the right, on the same side as the fire-place and opposite to the sofa on which she generally sits, there is a glazed door, shut both from within and without by means of bolts. I pass by the porter, who, under the impression that I am going to Madame Vidal’s rooms, pays no further attention to me. Instead of going up the large staircase, I hurriedly ascend that used by the servants. I open a door, the key of which I obtained possession of some time ago, I enter a corridor and find myself at the glazed door. There I crouch down in a corner, put one eye to a little opening I have contrived,

and I see without being seen, and hear without being heard, for I hold my breath and press my heart with my two hands to prevent it beating."

"But this is sheer folly!"

"It is wisdom! By dint of suffering I shall possibly succeed in wearing out my sorrow."

"Give up these senseless projects," said the Marquis, "the mission entrusted to you has, thanks to your intelligence, been fulfilled—the assassin of Maurice Vidal is discovered. It is no longer any business of yours; it does not appertain to the police now, but to justice alone. Resume your former occupation, go back again to the Rue de l'Arbre Sec and the office in the Rue Saint Honoré, which you ought never to have left."

"I could not take up my office work again; my thoughts would be elsewhere."

"Would you rather leave Paris, France, and travel all over the world? I do not know what to do with my money, and my income positively embarrasses me. I have no interest in increasing the inheritance of my scamp of a

nephew. Set out on your travels, and I will give you an allowance proportionate to your wants."

"Oh! my lord, how good you are," said Vibert.

"Not I, I am not good. I am fond of you, and that is all, idiot; come, do you say yes?"

"No, my lord, I shall be strong enough to endure, but I should not have the courage to go away from her."

"Go to the devil, then," exclaimed the Marquis, taking up his hat.

"That is good advice, and I will follow it," said Vibert, as he respectfully accompanied his protector as far as the bottom of the staircase.





## CHAPTER XIV.

IF it were natural, as the Marquis de X— had said, that Vibert should leave the Hotel des Princes, it would have been still more so that Julia Vidal should return to her house in the Rue de la Paix. Had she not taken up her abode in the Rue de Grammont for the sole purpose of receiving Savari's visits and at the same time hiding from him her past life? Why so much mystery now? Why not resume her real name, and once more re-enter a home still all-pervaded with memories dear to her heart?

"You have been arrested," she might have said to Savari, "you have been suspected of a crime. I did not know you, and I, too, suspected you. I assumed a disguise and appeared in a feigned character in order to obtain the proofs of your guilt. Now that your innocence

is recognized, I ask your forgiveness for my detestable suspicions, and I become Julia Vidal once more."

She dared not make use of such language, fearing to place Savari in too false and difficult a position as regarded herself. She perhaps also dreaded being put to the blush before him on account of all her past deception.

At the same time she could not help saying to herself—

"This state of things cannot last; he must be told who I am. I cannot continue to play this perpetual comedy and conduct myself like an adventuress. I have a name, an honourable name, and I ought to resume it. I will, I must speak out."

She did not speak out, but persisted in her error of avoiding the confession that she had been in the wrong.

They had resumed their former mode of life with the solitary exception that Vibert no longer intruded on their interviews. This sudden disappearance struck Savari for a short time as being odd, and he asked Julia for an

explanation, but she appeared uneasy and did not reply. Savari did not feel himself justified in dwelling on the subject, and thought very naturally that the Count, in whom he had noticed a tendency to jealousy, was on his account on terms of coldness with his cousin.

Every afternoon, about two o'clock, Savari made his appearance in the Rue de Grammont, and did not leave until dinner time. Seated at Julia's side, on the sofa in the drawing-room, he spoke to her of his early youth, of his entrance into life, of his struggles and his errors. He tried to give her a knowledge of himself, and to induce her to form a more favourable opinion of him than fell to his lot as a rule.

"I have been reproached," he said to her, "with living on my wits, with not having made for myself any position in the world, with having no rent roll, with the absence of official employment, and with being useless to everybody, myself in particular. The accusation is just. If I had my life to begin over again, I should take a different view of things. But ought not some allowance to be made for

the innumerable obstacles which I have encountered in my path ? I began life without a protector, without family, without friends, and with only a few thousand francs by way of fortune. I ought to have worked ; but had I been brought up to work ? No, my mother scarce gave a thought to me. She cared for nothing but the unceasing round of gaiety to which she devoted herself. I am not blaming her, she loved me after her own fashion. But, in certain cases, people would do well to avoid bringing children into the world. If you only knew the sights I had constantly before my eyes, the peculiar existence I led, and the irregularities in our mode of life ! One day rich, the next poor. Sometimes there would be a magnificent ball of which all the newspapers would give a glowing account, and all Paris would be mad after invitations to it. Dancing, eating, and drinking would last until daylight, and then all the guests would go home delighted ; but when all had gone, my mother would collect all her jewels and her dresses, and send them to the pawn-shop, to pay an upholsterer



or an ice-dealer who declined to give credit. How many times have I breakfasted like a prince, and supped off a raw apple! What careless gaiety there was amidst all this disorder! How little importance was attached to prosperity or adversity! And the creditors! When they left off threatening a seizure and ceased to flood the house with writs, how very cheaply they were held! There was never anybody at home to them. They came in at one door and went out laughing by another. As for the writs, nobody took the slightest notice of them until they appeared in the form of a huge bundle of papers, accompanied by a lengthy statement of costs, and escorted by a bailiff and a couple of assistants. Ah! if some kind friend had only taken me aside and said, 'Be on your guard, my boy, and do not follow the example before you; it is not in this way that life should be understood. One day, perhaps, the world may cease to connect you with your mother, but take care lest you show yourself to be unmistakeably her son. Be above all things the

child of your own good works!’ But, destitute of advice, and dependent on myself alone, I lived as I always saw everybody living around me, and badly did I live until the day I met you. Then, for the first time, as I understood real love, so I awoke to the consciousness of what is called rectitude.’”

“And now, are you working hard?” asked Julia affectionately.

“Not yet, but I am on the look out for something to do.”

“Then how do you live? I have a right to ask now that I am your *confidante*.”

“Oh, at the present time,” he replied, “living is not a very expensive business to me. I no longer, as I used to do, require a continuous supply of louis. I have no more desire to show myself in the Bois from three to five, at Tortoni’s at six, and at the opera in the evening. When I wake, my first thought is to ask myself when I shall see you to-day? Then I dress and breakfast quietly, and fill up the rest of the time before coming here by perambulating the boulevards near this street.

I stay with you until you send me away, and I think of you for the remainder of the day."

She tried to speak to him calmly, as a friend or a sister, telling him that he should think of his future and struggle against a love to which she could not respond.

"You interest me," she confessed, "and I cannot hide it from you. I believe, too, that you are not entirely responsible for your mistakes, and that you have been judged harshly; you are more deserving than your reputation would seem to imply. I thank you for having been frank with me about your past life, of which I should have always been in ignorance but for your candour. I like you the better for it. But liking and friendship only can exist, as far as we are concerned; love must be banished. Let us have a thorough and sincere affection for each other. Like you, I am almost alone in the world; stand to me in place of family and friends, and respect the tears which I still shed."

He promised everything she wished, or rather all that she believed she wished. He

vowed to be content with what she offered him and never to mention love again to her, and the instant he had made his vow he broke it.

So their lives ran on until an accident, easy to be foreseen, happened to disturb them.

Since her husband's death Julia Vidal had been in the habit of reading the newspapers, being interested in knowing everything that might be said on the subject of the tragedy in the Rue de la Paix.

One morning she let fall the broad-sheet she was glancing over, and suddenly exclaimed, "It is infamous!" and she called Marietta.

"Read," she said to her, in a state of excitement, "read what the French journalists have the impertinence to write!"

As she spoke, she pointed out a paragraph on the subject of the now fast approaching trial of Langlade. After giving an account of how the crime was committed, the article went on to say—"Langlade lived for several years with a woman called Soleil-Couchant, with whom he was madly in love. He discovered

Maurice Vidal in her house, followed him, and killed him in a moment of jealousy."

Julia, pale with indignation, snatched the newspaper out of Marietta's hands, as soon as the latter had glanced over the paragraph, and exclaimed—

"In our country there would be dire vengeance on any man who dared to utter such a calumny. What ! let it go forth to the world that my husband had been the lover of a girl like that ! That he was found with her on the day before he expected me ! I will give a startling denial to that article. It wounds me in all that is dearest to me !"

She turned towards Marietta, and said—

"Help me to dress. I am going to the office of this newspaper."

The Editor to whom Madame Vidal presented herself, but not by name, an hour afterwards, assured her that he had the news in question from a person employed at the Palais, and too well-informed to make any mistake.

Julia, without delay, turned her steps to—

wards the Palais-de-Justice, and succeeded in obtaining an interview with M. Gourbet.

“Madame,” said he, as soon as she had explained her motive for coming to him, “the paragraph which distresses you, and very naturally so, emanated neither from my colleagues nor myself. We are not in the habit of giving the newspapers any details with regard to cases under consideration; on the contrary, we deprecate such indiscretion, which frequently is dangerous. But in this case the indiscretion is committed, the blow is struck, and I can only pity you and express to you my sincere sympathy.”

“I do not understand you, sir. Pity me! I am not to be pitied. This article does not grieve me, seeing that it is a lie. It simply excites my indignation.”

M. Gourbet was silent.

“You do not reply?” said she. “Do you believe—you, too, by chance—the extraordinary tale this paper tells?”

“Madame,” said the Magistrate, after a momentary pause, “if it were possible to hide

the truth from you for ever, believe me, I should not, in spite of your persistence, reply to your question. Unfortunately, the trial of this Langlade will shortly take place ; you will be directly mixed up in it, and will be, perforce, conversant with every petty detail of it. It is therefore better to be frank with you to-day—the paragraph of which you complain is perfectly correct.”

“Do you mean to say,” exclaimed Julia, “that in my absence my husband betook himself to that creature ?”

“He was killed a few minutes after leaving her house.”

“It is impossible.”

“It is only too true.”

“You possess the proofs of what you state ?”

“Alas ! Yes, Madame. I am the Magistrate, as you know, entrusted with the preliminary proceedings in this case.”

For three days Julia denied herself to Savari, but she did not shut herself up in her house. She went out several times, and first of all to

the Church of Saint-Roch, where every morning, since the death of her husband, she had been accustomed to burn a taper. Only instead of remaining, as of yore, on her knees in prayer whilst the taper was burning, she ordered that one should be burnt each day, and paid a month in advance so that she might not be obliged to go again.

She subsequently, accompanied by Marietta, paid a visit to the Rue de la Paix, packed in her trunks all her belongings which she had not transferred to the Rue de Grammont, and ordered the porter to sell the furniture and let the rooms.

Finally, she paid each morning her daily visit to the Cemetery of Père-la-Chaise. Usually, before this visit, she stopped at one of the first florists in Paris and bought a bouquet of violets, surrounded by a garland of roses. They had been Maurice's favourite flowers, and she had conceived the touching idea of placing on his grave every morning a bouquet like those he had given her in days gone by.



This time she confined herself to laying on the tomb of her husband the classic wreath of immortelles.

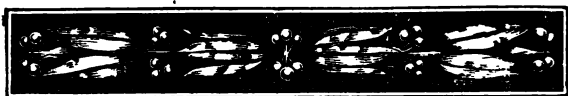
At the end of three days, Savari, pale and downcast, at length found Julia at home and visible.

“Ah !” he cried, “Why have you once more banished me from your presence? Why?”

She interrupted him, by saying—

“Do not complain. I assure you that it would be unjust on your part. You have no reason to complain.”





## CHAPTER XV.

As Vibert was going along one of the passages in the 'Prefecture of Police, where he was obliged to report himself in person from time to time, he one day came across the chief of the detective force.

"Hallos!" said the chief, in accosting him, "you have got us into a pretty mess."

"What do you mean?" asked Vibert.

"We have been within an ace of losing Langlade."

"Trying to escape again, I suppose?"

"No, he has been on the point of death."

"He would have done far better, poor devil, if he had made an end of it."

"As far as he is concerned, no doubt, but not for us. There would have been no lack of people to say that we had either killed him, or let him escape. All the world is looking for-

ward to an exciting trial, and your Parisian is not amiable when his emotions or his pleasures are interfered with. Happily, however, Langlade is now completely cured."

"What was the matter with him?"

"A rush of blood to the head, or a brain fever of some kind. It followed immediately on the interview with Soleil-Couchant, which you thought yourself bound to contrive."

"That is the reason why his trial has been delayed so long?"

"Exactly so. We only ask to get rid of him as quickly as possible. He is by no means a comfortable kind of prisoner. He requires constant watching."

"Does he still break out into violence?"

"No; he is just now very quiet, even depressed, but we have learnt to our cost to mistrust him, so we are continually on our guard."

"Where has he been moved to?" asked Vibert.

"Nowhere. He is at the Conciergerie. We prefer having him in our own hands. By-

the-way, now that you are here you ought to go and see him."

"I! what for?"

"You have a certain influence over him, as you have proved to us, and you may possibly contrive to induce him to reply to the questions put to him by the Magistrate."

"So he will not answer? I expected as much."

"It has been impossible from the very commencement of his examination to get a word, much less a confession, out of him."

"He has confessed once, and that is enough."

"It would be better if he would speak now. It will be a pity to see him persist in his absolute silence before a jury."

"Oh," said Vibert, "you need not labour under the least uncertainty on that point. He will persist if he has made up his mind to it. When an idea gets into a head of that calibre it is not easily got out again."

"Will you try? I believe you would succeed."

"I raise no objection. I merely say that it is useless."

"Come with me ; I will take you to him."

Langlade, when Vibert entered his cell, was stretched at full length on the bed with his face turned to the wall. Not being accustomed to see visitors, he probably thought it was a warder of the prison on some duty or other, and he did not give himself the trouble of turning round.

Vibert walked straight up to the bed, and, touching him on the shoulder, said—

"So we have been ill, old fellow, have we ?"

Langlade started up, the colour came into his face, still very pale, and his eyes, dim from illness, brightened as he said to Vibert—

"It is you ! There, I am glad to see you. How are your bruises ?"

"Pshaw ! don't talk of them. That's past and gone long ago. I have had none of your luck. I have not suffered from brain fever. During your illness, at all events, you could forget."

"Yes," said Langlade, bitterly, "but I am better to-day."

"Do you still harp upon that creature who has made you suffer so cruelly?"

"Yes, always."

"Is it possible that you love her still?"

"Yes," said Langlade, without hesitation.

"Does that astonish you?" he added.

"I," said Vibert, "I—am I astonished at your stupidity? Why, I am a match for you. I even think I could give you points in the game. Am I astonished at your persisting in loving one who does not love you? It's always so, my dear fellow. You adore Soleil-Couchant because she has behaved towards you in the most atrocious way. If she had been very sweet, very good, very submissive; if she had paid you her morning visit regularly with a bunch of violets in her hand, you would have soon wearied of her. Just think for a moment—if one loved always and were always beloved, it would be too much happiness. Life would be summed up in one hugh embrace and a never-ending kiss."

"You have seen her?" asked Langlade, who had been impatiently waiting until Vibert

had got rid of his aphorisms to put the question.

“No,” replied the police agent, “I have never set eyes on her.”

“Where is she now?”

“I know absolutely nothing about her.”

“I have tried,” said Langlade, “to question the warders about her, but they will not answer me.”

“That is not very wonderful ; prison warders are not, as a rule, very communicative. You yourself, moreover, take advantage of this privilege of silence.”

“Yes, they want to make me talk, but it is not in my line. May I ask whether you, by chance, are on the same errand?”

“I should not be sorry to persuade you to answer the questions put by the Magistrate. He is a fine fellow, and ought to have his own way.”

“He wearies me.”

“That’s his business. You weary him still more, you do, by refusing to speak to him.”

"What do you want me to tell him? He asks me a whole heap of things I don't understand. He insists on a detailed account of how I killed that fellow in the Rue de la Paix. As for me, I prefer not saying anything about that, and I have determined to act the mute."

"Have you conferred with your counsel?"

"My counsel! I refused to go into the waiting-room when he came."

"How, in that case, can he defend you?"

"I don't care about his defending me!" exclaimed Langlade, hotly. "Let them leave me in peace. They will condemn me all the same, whatever I say and whatever I do."

"But," said Vibert, "all the same, you have a loop-hole for escape."

"Come, it was you who told me that my case was as clear as could be."

"I may have made a mistake," remarked Vibert. "Your case is bad enough, that is certain, by the light of your antecedents, but a clever barrister can make a strong point of there not having been any premeditation on your part, and you having acted solely on an



impulse of rage and jealousy, which made you take leave of your senses. Besides, in France there are plenty of juries who, being averse to capital punishment, invariably accompany their verdict with a recommendation to mercy on account of extenuating circumstances."

"But," exclaimed Langlade, "I don't want any such recommendation. If I cannot live with Soleil-Couchant I would rather die."

"As you please. You have made up your mind to make no defence. Be it so. It is as good a kind of suicide as any other. Good-bye, then. Do you want anything? Would you like some tobacco?"

"No, I do not smoke."

"Just so ; you have no faults—only vices."

"Nevertheless, you can do me a great kindness," said Langlade, as Vibert knocked at the door to call the warder.

"I know what you are going to ask," replied Vibert, turning back. "You want news of Soleil-Couchant? I will find out about her."

"Don't bring me only what they tell you. Go and see her yourself."

"So I will."

"And speak to her about me."

"All the time."

"And if she says anything kind?"

"I will come and tell you. Good-bye."

"*Au revoir*," said Langlade.

The door closed.





## CHAPTER XVI.

VIBERT, after leaving Langlade, went to give an account of his visit to the chief of the detective force.

“As I anticipated,” he said, “I have not been able to prevail upon him to speak. It is quite likely that he will refuse to answer the questions put to him by the judge at his trial. I have, it is true, an infallible means of drawing him out of his obstinate silence. I might tell him that Soleil-Couchant, when I saw her, repented of the way she had treated him, that from the time she was separated from him she felt that she loved him, that she begged him to forgive her and shield her, and hoped that he would be sent merely to the hulks from which he might, according to his wont, escape to rejoin her.”

Langlade would certainly have placed implicit confidence in such a tale; we are all so

apt to believe what can make us happy, and, above everything, we are so credulous when we are in love, and, when suffering, so well disposed to suffer no longer. But Vibert was unwilling to make use of such means. He had had time to come to a conclusion about Soleil-Couchant, and knew that she was not a woman to change her opinion. Far from being anxious for Langlade's liberation, she wished him from the bottom of her heart a speedy condemnation to death, so that she might be freed from him for ever.

"Why," he reflected, "make the unhappy wretch cling to life? If he were to be condemned to death, his having confided in me would be a source of still greater suffering for him. If he be sent to the hulks and escape from them, Soleil-Couchant with her hard-heartedness will kill him by inches."

Nevertheless Vibert, who was anxious to keep his promise to Langlade, asked what news there was about Soleil-Couchant.

"She has been at large for the last fortnight," replied the chief of the detective force.

"You have let her go then?"

"Of course. She was only arrested for a petty offence, and she has received a free pardon for having turned King's evidence against her lover. As regards the assassination business, it is evident that she could not have been an accomplice, so she will appear at the assizes simply as a witness. It would be useless to give her board and lodging until then, at the expense of the State. We have plenty of interesting boarders as it is."

"Do you know what has become of her since she was set at liberty?" asked Vibert.

"Certainly we do. We were bound not to lose sight of her entirely, and if you wish to take a peep at her," added the chief, consulting a register, "she is living now in the Rue des Trois-Frères, at the corner of the Rue Saint-Lazare."

"In furnished apartments, I suppose!"

"Not a bit of it. The little devil has set up on her own account already. She is too pretty to lie fallow."

In fact, as the chief of the detective force

said, Soleil-Couchant, since her exit from the lock-up, had stumbled across an opportunity of setting up an establishment of her own, and had seized upon it at once. This time her furniture was of the right sort, bought from an upholsterer and paid for on the nail, not at all like the goods and chattels which Langlade had once so gracefully presented to his mistress at the expense of a householder in the suburbs of Paris.

This bounty, which Soleil-Couchant unexpectedly found bestowed upon her, was due to the generosity of a very well-to-do young Englishman. It happened in this wise. The door of the Conciergerie had scarcely been thrown open, and Soleil-Couchant was looking about her in that dazed and wondering fashion common to all prisoners on finding themselves once more at liberty, when she was accosted by a most picturesque youth. He had interminable legs, teeth of corresponding length, light hair of a neutral tint, blinking eyes, and a complexion like a girl who has been taking violent exercise in the sun. His body, long

and thin, was clothed after the very latest foppish fashion of the day.

“Ah! miss,” he exclaimed, with an unmistakable British accent, “I have not been misinformed. You are indeed very beautiful.”

Soleil-Couchant took the islander in from head to foot, burst into a laugh, and imitating his jargon of French and English mixed, said—

“Well, if I have a wealth of beauty, you are rich in ugliness.”

“Very good, quite so,” said the Englishman, “but I am the son of Lord B—, and I am already worth five thousand a year.”

“How much is that in French?” asked Soleil-Couchant, suddenly evincing considerable interest in the conversation.

“More than a hundred thousand francs.”

“Really. Then I won’t withdraw a word of what I said. You are richly ugly. What can I do for your Highness?”

“I have heard about you. Your adventures, your trial, and your hair. You are quite the rage in Paris at present, and I am come to ask you to live with me.”

"In this unexpected fashion, without letting me know beforehand? Aren't you afraid of the shock to my nerves? To live with you?—it has been the dream of my life. I had a presentiment of you before I knew you. I loved you before I even heard the sound of your seductive voice."

"That's all right. We shall come to terms without any difficulty," said the Englishman coolly, without taking the least notice of Soleil-Couchant's bantering tone, and with the *aplomb* resulting from a large fortune.

"Nothing easier, in fact," repeated Soleil-Couchant. "But first of all, tell me, how did you know that I should leave this establishment to-day?" she asked, pointing to the walls of the Conciergerie.

"Oh! I know everything. Will you come with me to my carriage? We shall be able to talk more at our ease there."

"Is that brougham and pair yours?"

"It is yours, if you will accept it."

"I make a point of always accepting; sufficient for the day is the good thereof."



The result of a conversation so commenced may easily be foreseen. The Englishman was as generous as he was ugly, and Soleil-Couchant had emerged from her prison-house like a foundling without a refuge and with a future altogether unprovided for. She accepted the proposals made to her, and, eight days afterwards, she was the possessor of a suite of apartments luxuriously furnished, a wardrobe filled with ravishing dresses, and an elegant barouche.

In Paris these sudden changes in the existence of a pretty woman are by no means rare. Fortune sometimes is pleased to overwhelm them with her favours, until such time as the alms-house claims them. For this class of woman especially, the Capitol has its Tarpeian rock hard by.

Vibert, in accordance with his promise to Langlade, presented himself at Soleil-Couchant's residence.

She recognized him at once, and exclaimed—

“What have I done now? Are you come to arrest me?”

"Don't be alarmed," replied Vibert, "I only wished to congratulate you on your magnificence. Really, all this is very nice."

"Upon your honour you have not come to arrest me?"

"I am here as a friend."

"Then embrace me," said she, putting her arms round his neck. Never had she appeared more lovely. Luxury suited her to a degree. She was in a morning toilet, or, rather, in *deshabille*, for she wore a large quilted dressing gown. Her hair, which since her liberation she had confided to the care of a skilful hair-dresser, was more silken and had a more dazzling sheen than ever. Her dressing gown could not entirely conceal her beautiful figure, and through her embroidered chemisette might be discerned on her bust a freckle here and there, which might be taken for beauty spots, placed, so to speak, by an artistic hand. Rounded ankles peeped at will from beneath her dressing gown, which was open at the bottom.

Vibert, to his great shame be it said, lost his

head for a moment, but, recovering himself, he begged Soleil-Couchant to be quiet, and making her sit down at some distance from him, he asked, as he looked round the room—

“ All this, then, belongs to you ? ”

“ Yes, my dear, my little Englishman has made me a present of the lot. I have all the bills receipted.”

“ So you are in the Englishman’s power ? ”

“ Not such a fool. It is the Englishman who is in my power, and don’t I make him go ! I have been beaten, you know, all my life ; now it’s my turn to beat.”

“ That’s only justice ; I perceive you understand the principle of a fair exchange.”

“ Do you see that pretty riding-whip with a coral handle ? He gave it to me yesterday, and I have not kept him in ignorance of what I am going to do with it.”

“ You mean to— ? ” said Vibert, finishing his sentence with an imaginary thrashing.

“ Certainly, I reckon upon a certain amount of exercise from time to time at the expense of his shoulders. He likes it, too, and laughs like

an idiot. He tells his friends that his little Frenchwoman adores him and thrashes him like a dog."

"You did not get as much enjoyment out of the correction Langlade used to administer to you."

"Don't talk to me about that brute. I can't think of him without a shudder. Has not his trial come on yet?"

"What a charming sweetheart of a woman," said Vibert aside to himself, "and it is for these delightful beings that we, more often than not, pass our lives in work and suffering."

He resumed aloud—

"I believe his trial will take place in a fortnight."

"That seems a long delay. I shall not be really comfortable until he is condemned. Till that happens, I shall always be afraid of his escaping. I dreamt last night that he caught my Englishman by the leg, whirled him round his head, and flung him out of the window. It was amusing, but it would compromise my

future terribly. I have my furniture, it is true, but I have not any income of my own."

"You will get it. I never despair of you."

"No, more do I of myself. I should be capitally off, you see, if that horrid giant had not appropriated five years of my life."

"Then you don't care about seeing him?"

"See him—*Mon Dieu !*" said she, turning pale, "you have not promised him that? That would be a positive outrage. They may do what they like with me, bar that."

"Don't be uneasy, my sweet friend. Langlade would be glad to see you, but we will not force you to pay him a visit."

"Thank you. You are doing me a great kindness."

"I merely promised him news of you."

"You can tell him that I am wonderfully well, that I am growing stout, that I have a colour, that I amuse myself like a little fool, and that I have for a lover the jolliest of Englishmen, who makes me the happiest of women—there. If he is not pleased at that, it must

be because he has never loved me. Will you promise me to tell him all that?"

"No," said Vibert, becoming serious. "That would be too hard upon the poor devil."

"You pity him, do you!" said Soleil-Couchant. "It's not difficult to see that you have not lived five years with him. I am not good, I confess, nor am I soft-hearted to excess—"

"That's palpable," remarked Vibert.

"But I am not so bad as you appear to think. As long as people don't do me any harm, I let them alone."

"That's the least you can do, at all events," said Vibert.

"Do you wish to make yourself very agreeable?" added Soleil-Couchant.

"As how?"

"Never mention my ex-giant again."

"Agreed. Good-bye."

"What! are you going?"

"The Englishman would only surprise me here if I stayed," said Vibert, smiling.

"Oh, I am not at all concerned for that," she replied with a laugh. "I should like to hear him say anything. You forget my whip. Moreover, it is perfectly understood between us that I am to have full liberty."

"In everything?" asked Vibert.

"Yes, decidedly, in everything. The hour of caprice has struck, and so you might find if you would leave off being so cold to me."

"Don't hope for any such thing," replied Vibert, laughing.

She planted herself in front of him, and said—

"Evidently, you don't think me pretty?"

"On the contrary, I do; admirably so."

"Then I don't understand you."

"I understand myself still less."

"Would you ever love anybody else?" she asked.

"Don't let us talk of that," said Vibert, brusquely.

"That answer is a confession."

"Take it for what you will."

“Well, so be it, but if at any time you are unhappy on account of that woman, come and see me. ‘Set a thief to catch a thief,’ says the proverb.”

“That depends on the thief to be caught,” replied Vibert.







## CHAPTER XVII.

A FASHIONABLY dressed man, still young and *distingué* in face and manner alike, after having walked for some time up and down the Boulevard des Italiens, consulted his watch for about the twentieth time and then went into the Passage de l'Opera, where he bought a rose and a sprig of white lilac. This done, he crossed the Boulevards, went down the Rue de Grammont, ran hastily up three flights of stairs and made his way into a drawing-room, where one of the most charming women in the world smiled upon him, and held out her hand.

A few moments later, another man, undersized, lean, and insignificant, glided, with a downcast air, into the same house and went up a back staircase, halting on each step to see if anybody were coming down to meet him, or up behind him.

When he reached the third floor, he stealthily opened a door, which he as noiselessly shut after him. Step by step, and on tip-toe, he made his way along a small dark corridor and came to a standstill before another door, the upper panel of which, made of frosted glass, allowed a dim light only to penetrate through it. Then he crouched down on the ground, and searched for the cleanest spot in the pane, where the frosted glass had been rubbed so that it was transparent. He was not long in finding it, and at once set himself to watch attentively.

A large wood fire, throwing out a cheerful glow, and a lamp placed on a table, lighted up the drawing-room.

Savari was seated on the sofa which faced the glazed door, and Julia was by his side.

Still in deep mourning, a careful scrutiny of her toilet showed, nevertheless, that it was not so deep as of yore. Her dress, instead of being high to the throat, was cut rather low, and the crape, which formerly covered her shoulders, had given way to black lace. Her magnificent jet hair was coquettishly arranged,

and in it, on the left side of her head, a sprig of lilac was effectively placed. In the body of her dress was a rose. There was a certain alteration, also, both in her face and manner. Her bearing was more yielding, more in harmony, more voluptuous—if we may use the expression—than before. Her glance was less keen and had lost some of its brilliancy, but it was more tender, more melting. A certain animation overspread her countenance, and her cheeks were not so pale. One could almost see the blood circulating beneath her skin.

“Ought I to believe you so blindly,” said Julia, continuing a conversation already begun with Savari, “can I place implicit faith in your vows? Do not men accept it as a principle that engagements contracted with us go for nothing? Are we not made to be deceived? Do not interrupt me, I know what I am saying, and I am a living witness of more than one act of treason. You marry a young girl, pure, good, and trusting. She asks of you no account of your past life, but she wishes the pre-

sent to belong to her, and to her alone. She exacts a fidelity equal to hers, a devoted love, absolute as her own. In her innocence, her goodness, her simple trust, she cannot entertain an idea of aught else. No doubt, no suspicion clouds her mind. Would she dream of deceiving him she loves? Never. Does the thought of flirting with another man ever flit across her mind for an instant? No, it is impossible. And while she remains thus faithful and pure, even in thought, the man to whom all her trust is confided, to whom she has given herself entirely, and without reserve, meets by chance a creature, more or less seductive, looks at her, follows her, and thinks no more of his plight to another—”

“To another whom he did not love,” said Savari.

“Then why did he lie? why did he say he loved her?”

“He believed, perhaps, that he did. There are men who live after a fashion, so calm and quiet, who are happy in so unruffled a tranquillity, and are by nature and disposition so

protected from the influence of their passions, that they chance to be under an illusion as to the state of their heart. Because its pulse beats a little more quickly, and their thoughts turn with pleasure to her to whom they have given their preference, they imagine they are in love, and proclaim it from the house-tops. Fools!" continued Savari, hotly. "Have they any right to speak thus, to profane to such a degree a sentiment of which they know nothing? The rosewater love that they feel resembles that other, true love, as the fire that now glows round us resembles the sun. They were made but to appreciate the child's play, the puerilities, the prettiness of love. They will never know aught of that happiness without limit, those sorrows without number, that super-human joy, those sufferings beyond endurance, which give here on earth a glimpse at once of heaven and hell!"

Savari became animated to a degree as he spoke thus. His face lighted up, his eyes sparkled, and in his voice there was a tone of irresistible persuasion.

Julia could not help admiring his manly beauty, to which some altogether womanly trait lent additional charm. She did not notice that Savari, whilst speaking and without being aware of it himself, had drawn nearer to her, that he was touching her dress, and that one of his hands rested on hers.

The hearth glow shed its fitful gleams of light on this scene. The lamp encircled her with its subdued rays. The rose and the lilac exhaled an intoxicating aroma.

On the other side of the glass door, looking full upon the sofa, Vibert, ever silent, still crouching down, heard, gazed and suffered. He, too, regarded Savari with admiration. He would have dearly liked to have killed him, but he was forced to confess that he was really handsome, and undeniably eloquent.

Savari went on speaking—

“Yes,” he exclaimed, “the man who deceives the woman whom he says he loves, does not love her. If he loved her he would have no look, no thought but for her. The most lovely beings ever created might whirl around

him, might encircle him with their arms, might impregnate him with their breath—they would not even tempt him. For him the world would begin and end with one woman. Near her he would forget the past and the future, the petty annoyances of every day, the difficulties of life, the wounds to his self-esteem, and the vexations of each hour. Remorse even—remorse, which is said to be implacable—could not touch him, nor turn him aside from the thought of her he loves. Ah!” continued Savari, “do not be amazed at hearing me speak thus. My early youth, spent so frivolously, never foreshadowed such an experience for me. But that blessing has reached me since I saw you. I now understand the passion in all its exalted, pure, vehement and real phases. I love you with all the strength of my being! I love you to the verge of madness! Have pity on me! I die a living death in seeing you and not daring to clasp you to my heart. Near you I have all the timidity of a child, and yet my blood dances through my veins, my head is on fire,

a thousand transports possess me. For pity's sake, be tender to me and tell me my fate! Must I die or hope?"

"Hope!" exclaimed Julia, suddenly.

And, with that Italian ardour of hers, that *furia* so long restrained, she threw her arms around him.

Their lips met in one long kiss.

At the same moment a cry resounded from the other side of the glass door.

Neither Julia nor Savari heard it.

To the cry succeeded the noise of a door shut with a crash.

Vibert fled.

He gained the street, and was in doubt what to do.

All of a sudden, panting and desperate, he formed his resolution. He crossed the boulevards, went down the Rue Taibout into the Rue du Houssaye, which then was a continuation of the Rue Taibout, and thence to the Rue des Trois-Frères.

He stopped opposite a house, rang the bell with a trembling hand, hurried past the porter,



hurling, as it were, a name at him, and went up to the second floor.

It was then eleven o'clock, and Soleil-Couchant had just turned her young Englishman, who weighed on her spirits that evening, out of doors.

"Halloa!" she exclaimed, as she saw Vibert.

"You here at this hour!"

"You offered me your love," he replied curtly; "I accept it."

"I have only one word for you—Welcome!" said she.

Then, in the most brusque manner, he drew her towards him, took her head between his hands, and looked into her eyes. Then, quickly putting her away from him, he said—

"No, no, it is not her look; it is not she. I will not. Adieu!"

"It was scarcely worth while coming for that," said Soleil-Couchant, as she saw him going away. "I must say," she added, with a sigh, "he is a regular cure."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE proceedings in that serious case, for a long time known at the Palais-de-Justice as the "Tragedy in the Rue de la Paix," commenced at last in the Assize Court of the Seine in the latter part of February, 1848.

In spite of the species of political fever which for some days past appeared to have seized on the Parisians, in spite of the attention excited by the famous patriotic banquets then in preparation, an enormous crowd had gathered since the morning in the vicinity of the Assize court.

At half-past nine, the privileged persons, amongst whom were several ladies of the fashionable world, were admitted into the Court, and took their places on their seats behind those reserved for the witnesses.

The general public entered a short time

afterwards, and found standing room in the enclosure appropriated to them.

On the table, where the various articles to be put in evidence were generally placed, there were to be seen only a long dagger and a red memorandum book, open at the page where Maurice Vidal had written a few words in his blood.

About ten witnesses had been subpœnaed by the Crown. There were none for the defence, Langlade having refused to name any to the barrister who appeared for him.

The Court opened at a quarter past ten, the jury having been drawn by lot in the Council Chamber.

Contrary to the generally received rumour amongst the public, neither handcuffs nor a strait waistcoat had been put on Langlade. The presiding judge thought such a precautionary measure useless, and in fact it is not usual except in extreme cases, because the prisoner, unless under very exceptional circumstances, ought to have full liberty of action before his judges.

Two gendarmes entered with Langlade and took their seats on either side of him.

He did not appear to be conscious of what was going on around him. He was very much dejected, and appeared to avoid looking round the room.

The public were to a certain extent disappointed. They had anticipated seeing quite another style of man, and had counted from the very first on scenes of violence.

A rumour was current out of doors that the prisoner was not equal to his reputation, and that he had suddenly become intimidated by the paraphernalia of justice.

The gendarmes who had been cautioned not to lose sight of their prisoner for an instant, were asking themselves if their instructions were not unnecessary. A few minutes later their zeal began to abate.

"Prisoner, stand up," said the presiding judge.

Langlade did not budge an inch.

"Gendarmes," resumed the Judge, "assist the prisoner to stand up."

The gendarmes took Langlade, each by an arm, and raised him to his feet.

He looked at them with an air of astonishment, and then, comprehending what was wanted of him, turned towards the Court.

"What is your name?" asked the Judge.

"Hector Langlade," replied the prisoner.

"Q.—Your age?"

"A.—Thirty-six."

"Q.—You were born in the Department of Vaucluse?"

"A.—Yes; near Avignon."

"Q.—You have been convicted on two previous occasions and sentenced; the first time to five years', and the second to twenty years' hard labour."

"A.—Perhaps so."

"Q.—You escaped on two occasions from Toulon and Brest?"

"A.—Yes."

"Q.—When last arrested, you were residing at No. 22, Rue Croix Petits des Champs?"

"A.—Yes."

The Judge now informed the prisoner that

his indictment would be read, on which the latter dropped into his seat without waiting for an invitation, and, turning his head away, half shut his eyes.

The Registrar read the indictment, which we will omit, seeing that our readers are already fully conversant with Langlade's life and the charges brought against him.

When this was done, the witnesses were called upon to answer their names, and on hearing that of Stéphaïne Cornu, *alias* Soleil-Couchant, Langlade opened his eyes and turned pale, but he did not move his head.

The witnesses withdrew into the room set apart for them, and the Judge, now ready to proceed with the examination of the prisoner, requested him to stand up again.

"What for?" asked Langlade.

"To reply to the questions which I am about to put to you."

"In that case it would be useless, as I do not intend to reply," said Langlade.

A murmur, repressed at once by the Judge, ran through the Court, the crowd beginning

to see that the prisoner was, perhaps, not quite so manageable as he appeared to be.

“Prisoner at the bar,” said the Judge kindly, “I wish to point out to you that by persisting in your silence you will damage your cause in the eyes of the jury.”

“I have confessed my crime,” said Langlade. “What more is wanted?”

“The Court wishes to ascertain from your own mouth, without the necessity of relying absolutely on the evidence to be given by the witnesses in the case, in what manner the crime was committed. I repeat, you can only secure the indulgence of the Court and the jury by deference to the customs in force here.”

“I do not ask indulgence from any one,” replied Langlade, without raising his voice. “Send me to the scaffold as soon as you can—that is all I want.”

The counsel entrusted by the Crown with the defence of the prisoner here leaned over to him, and endeavoured to persuade him to reason, but in vain.

The Judge, after patiently waiting until the conclusion of this colloquy, directed that, as the prisoner refused to reply and the Court had no means of compelling him so to do, the examination of the witnesses should be proceeded with.

The first witness called was Madame Vidal, and her appearance was watched with eager interest by the assembled crowd.

The Judge begged the witness to control her very natural agitation and to reply to the questions which, unfortunately, had to be put to her.

Julia Vidal gave the details of her arrival in Paris, the difficulty she had experienced in effecting an entrance into her house and the state in which she found the rooms. She also replied to various other questions with a greater amount of calmness than might have been expected.

When her examination, which the Judge made as short as possible, was over, Madame Vidal asked if it was necessary for her to remain



until the end of the trial, and the Judge, after a consultation with the jury and the counsel for the prisoner, allowed her to leave.

She bowed in a dignified manner, and withdrew.

The second witness was the porter of the Rue de la Paix, whose evidence need not be repeated, as it was essentially the same as that to which he had deposed before M. Gourbet.

The prisoner's counsel, at this point, called the attention of the jury to the fact that this witness adhered to the statement that he had not seen anybody go up to Maurice Vidal's rooms on the 19th October, and he maintained that if Langlade had entered the house, he could not have passed unnoticed, as his imposing stature must inevitably have betrayed him.

On this point a discussion between the Crown Advocate and the counsel for the prisoner ensued.

Langlade, who had kept silence up to this, suddenly gave signs of extreme impatience, and exclaimed—

“What’s the good of all this? I have said that I struck the blow. Let us make an end of it.”

“Prisoner at the bar,” said the Judge, in a firm tone of voice, “since you refuse to speak in answer to the questions put to you, the Court will not allow you to interrupt the proceedings. Your counsel will take whatever line of defence he thinks best. His task is by no means an easy one; do not make it an impossibility.”

The Crown Advocate, in his turn, attempted to explain to the prisoner that his confession was not sufficient for the ends of justice, which required all the proofs necessary for the full elucidation of the case. In conclusion, he said—

“When a criminal, abhorring his heinous crimes, abandons himself, the law, that universal protectress, still undertakes his defence.”

This oratorical effort had not the slightest effect upon Langlade, who contented himself with a shrug of his shoulders.

This second witness was succeeded by several lodgers at No. 6, Rue de la Paix. The only

thing gathered from their evidence was that they had neither seen nor heard anything remarkable during the evening of the 19th October.

A man named Jacquet, porter of the house in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, where Stéphanie Cornu lived, deposed to having seen a young man go up to her apartments one evening in the previous October, but he could not fix the exact date. The description which he gave of this unknown individual appeared to tally pretty correctly with the portrait of Maurice Vidal, but the counsel for the prisoner remarked that, according to this witness, the man in question was under the medium height, whereas those who had known Maurice Vidal all agreed in saying that, although he was not tall, he would never have been called undersized. The further examination of this witness by the Court was as follows:—

“Q.—What made you think that the person of whom you speak went to see Stéphanie Cornu?

“A.—I had seen him talking to her at the street door on the previous evening.

“Q.—Then he did not inquire of you on which floor your lodger lived?

“A.—No, my lord, he had probably obtained that information before.

“Q.—Was the woman, Stéphanie Cornu, in the habit of receiving strange gentlemen?

“A.—No. Previously to the day in question, I never saw anybody with her except the prisoner.

“Q.—And when the prisoner arrived, immediately afterwards, did he speak to you?

“A.—Yes, my lord, he asked me whether the lady was at home. I was afraid of a row between the two, so I said she had gone out.

“Q.—Notwithstanding that, he went up?

“A.—Yes, my lord, he did not put any faith in what I said.

“Q.—And you saw him go out?

“A.—About half-an-hour afterwards; he walked a few paces off the other man. I thought they were acquainted.

“Q.—Did the prisoner, when he passed you, seem agitated?

“A.—Yes, my lord, but that did not alarm

me. He frequently quarrelled with my lodger, and he was generally out of sorts when he left her.

“Q.—Have you personally had reason to complain of his violence?

“A.—Very often, my lord; once he wanted to throw me out of the window.”

This reply excited considerable merriment amongst the crowd, which was speedily subdued by the Judge declaring emphatically that he would take means to stop any further interruption, of whatever kind it might be.

The witness went on to say that, although the prisoner was excessively violent, he was not a bad man, and that when his anger had passed over, he would always ask his, the witness', pardon, and give him a couple of francs as a *douceur*.

We are giving a summary of the evidence instead of a detailed account, which latter would be very easy, because our readers have for some time been familiar with the details, and we have no wish to be wearisome. We will, therefore, omit certain important evidence.

such as that of the Commissioner of Police of the Tuileries section, the doctor, and Vibert, with all of which we are conversant, and pass on to the examination of Soleil-Couchant. The arrival on the scene of this fresh witness will not add anything to our knowledge of the case, but it was destined to effect a very important change in the attitude of the prisoner, and to lead up to the remarkable incident which brought the trial to an unlooked-for conclusion.

As might have been expected from such a creature, Soleil-Couchant had got herself up for the occasion in her richest and most striking costume. When she was called, she stepped forward, without hesitation, and smiled on all those who stretched forward to get a look at her.

The prisoner, still preserving the same attitude, did not turn his head. His half-closed eyes did not open a whit wider, and it might have been supposed that he was as indifferent to this witness as to the others. Nevertheless, an acute physiognomist would

have detected certain significant indications. Langlade's brow contracted, the blood left his lips, and his fingers beat a devil's tattoo on the bar of the dock.

"You know the prisoner?" asked the Judge, after the usual preliminary questions had been put and answered.

"Oh, yes, my lord, very well. Very much too well," she added, smiling.

"You will have the goodness to abstain from all comments," replied the Judge, severely. "Your 'very much too well' was superfluous; 'very well' was sufficient. You will also be good enough to try, at all events, to conduct yourself with more gravity. Do not forget that you are in a court of justice, and that you have already appeared here on your own account. And now tell the Court all you know about the unhappy man whom your coquetry induced to pay you a visit one evening. When you have finished speaking, I shall have certain questions to put to you. You may begin."

Soleil-Couchant, turning now to the Court, now to the jury, now to Langlade, and oc-

casionaly, to use a time-honoured expression, appealing to the gods, repeated what we have already heard her tell Vibert. Her very figurative language, the cynicism of some of her expressions, and the manner in which she abused her former lover, several times drew from the audience murmurs which the Judge, whilst evidently sharing in the general indignation, was bound to suppress.

Langlade alone, accustomed, undoubtedly, to the reproaches and amenities of Soleil-Couchant, made no sign nor uttered a word. On the contrary, he seemed to take a pleasure in hearing her speak. In spite of himself he had turned by degrees towards her, and was looking at her.

In his look there was neither hate, contempt, nor anger. It was rather a mixture of sadness, regret, and admiration.

After having replied to all the questions put to her by the Judge, and having received from him a sharp, but just reproof, Soleil-Couchant returned to her seat. She still smiled just as graciously to the Court, the jury,



the barristers and the public, appeared to try to catch all eyes, and did not seem in the least degree conscious of the bad effect she had produced.

The Judge subsequently examined two witnesses, and then directed an adjournment for a quarter of an hour.

The gendarmes withdrew with their prisoner, and the audience broke up into small knots for a little private discussion.

Soleil-Couchant endeavoured to engage her neighbours in conversation, but, actuated by a sense of shame, even the men found an excuse for getting away from her. In vain did she shoot out her most provoking glances at the youthful licentiates of the law. Those gentlemen pulled their wigs over their eyes, wrapped themselves up in their gowns, buried their chins in their bands, and, for the moment, proved themselves invulnerable.

Her isolation was beginning to weigh upon her when she suddenly caught sight of her young Englishman, who had profited by the adjournment to gain, by means of some pecu-

niary consideration, an entrance into the Court. She joined him at once, made him sit down beside her, and engaged him in a lively and animated pantomime.

The Englishman was in raptures; he laughed all over his face, including his long teeth, and put his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat.

A bell rang; an usher announced the entrance of the judges, and the trial was resumed.

This time, as he entered the Court, the prisoner's first look was towards Soleil-Couchant. Simultaneously he perceived the young man, with whom she appeared to be conversing with more and more familiarity, and he frowned heavily.

The Judge called upon the Crown Advocate to address the jury, and accordingly the latter rose and commenced his speech as follows:—

“May it please your lordship. Gentlemen of the jury—

“In rising to address you in support of this terrible indictment, I cannot shake off a feeling

of profound sadness, for it is my duty to ask of you a verdict which will carry with it fearful consequences. But I must silence my grief and recall to my mind that I am here not only as the representative of society outraged by the commission of an awful crime and by the murder of a good man, but also as a pleader in the cause of human life. My task, I know, is a difficult one, but I will endeavour to rise to the level of it. Above all, gentlemen, it is necessary that you should know the man who stands in the dock before you, and whom you are called upon to judge."

After this exordium the Crown Advocate took Langlade from his birth, followed him step by step through his life, and showed, with great elegance of style, that he had always been a prey to the most detestable passions, and that he never respected any law, human or divine. He animadverted especially, with fierce indignation and great severity towards the prisoner, on his long connection with the woman known as Soleil-Couchant, the principal cause of his crimes and his downfall.

Then, plunging into the heart of the question, he devoted himself to construct out of the links of evidence a chain of argument to establish beyond refutation the guilt of Langlade.

He wound up by maintaining that the prisoner was unworthy of any consideration, and he expressed his hope that the jury, true to their oath, would put aside any scruples they might have, and strike down the murderer in memory of his victim.

During this address, Langlade exhibited signs of extreme impatience and irritation. Those who noticed it attributed it to his resenting the severe handling he was receiving from the Crown Advocate; but the more skilful observers, who directed all their attention to Langlade's bearing, found other causes for the exasperation he evinced.

It was now the turn of the counsel for the prisoner. Following the example of the Crown Advocate, he went back to the prisoner's youth, but he took care to show that his

youth, destitute of advice and thrown upon itself, desolate and sad, was all in favour of his client.

“The learned Crown Advocate,” he exclaimed, “has been pleased to depict this man as a prey to the most execrable passions, and given up to all kinds of vice. I look for these vices and I do not find them. The man for whom I appear is neither a gambler, nor a drunkard, nor a libertine. No, he is not a libertine, since one single passion has ruled his life, that which he has entertained for the woman who has appeared before you, for her profound corruption and for her fatal beauty. If he had not met that woman he might perhaps have been an industrious man, an honest labourer; and if that woman, instead of being a wretch, had shown any good feeling towards the man who loved her, Langlade would not be here. But, gentlemen of the jury, do you not see, in the obstinate persistence of my client in abstaining from any defence, the dreadful suffering he is undergoing, the deep distaste he has for life, the discourage-

ment which has taken hold of his mind ? The Crown Advocate calls that remorse ; as for me, I contend that it is love—outraged, hopeless love ! And my conscience, gentlemen, bids me defend this unhappy man, who repels me, and who is unwilling to be defended. He says he is guilty, and I say that he merely wishes to die. I assert that to condemn him would be to lend a helping hand to suicide. That you cannot, you have no right to wish ! ”

These touching words appeared to produce a great effect upon the audience.

As for Langlade, after having listened for a short time to his counsel, he made a grimace, as much as to say, “ What a good fellow he is to give himself so much trouble.”

Then he turned towards Soleil-Couchant, who, flirting more vigorously than ever, was showering her bewitching glances on her young Englishman.

The Counsel now entered on the gist of the matter. He passed in review, with great conciseness and undoubted ability, various circumstances which, in his opinion, had never been

cleared up. He laid great stress on the point that Maurice Vidal, whatever the Crown Advocate might say, could not have known Langlade, and consequently could not have had any idea of writing the name of his murderer, that is, if Langlade had committed the crime.

He reminded the jury also, that Langlade's victim, according to the evidence of Stéphanie Cornu and the porter of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustine, had a high-coloured, very ruddy complexion, whilst Maurice Vidal was described by all who knew him as having been pale to a degree.

"There is in all this affair," added the speaker, "something strange and mysterious, which ought, gentlemen, to make you hesitate before giving your verdict. A crime has been committed, a man has pleaded guilty to having committed it, and there is a certain amount of proof against him ; all this I admit. But, in spite of this confession, in the face of these proofs, I should hesitate, gentlemen, I assure you. Or, rather, no, I should not hesitate. I should acquit this man. I would consent to

let a guilty man go unpunished sooner than have to regret all my life the death of an innocent one. More than all, I should not forget the words of one of our greatest orators—‘When God has not revealed a crime fully to men, it is a sign that He wills not that they should judge it, and that He reserves the decision for His supreme tribunal.’”

At the very moment when it was thought that this eloquent address had been brought to a conclusion, and when a subdued murmur of approbation was heard throughout the Court, the counsel for the prisoner, to quote the newspapers of the day, had a moment of oratorical inspiration, as magnificent as can well be imagined.

He turned quickly towards the prisoner, seized his hands, clasped them in his own, and adjured him to say that he was not guilty. A shiver of excitement ran through the vast assemblage; every heart stood still. Langlade alone appeared unmoved by the efforts of his counsel to save him. His eyes were ever fixed on Soleil-Couchant. Suddenly, through the



gloom which had, shadow by shadow, fallen on the Court, he thought that he saw that the Englishman, seated by the side of his companion, had passed his arm round her waist, and that she was resting her head on the shoulder of her new lover.

A sight such as that was beyond his endurance. Terrible thoughts of vengeance flitted through his excited brain, and, grasping eagerly the hands which his counsel stretched out towards him, he exclaimed—

“No! I am not guilty!”

The excitement amongst the audience was at its height. Two or three persons stood up, but the first words of the Judge restored the calmness which, for a moment, had been disturbed.

“You are rather late,” said he to the prisoner, “in telling us of your innocence. After having refused up to now to answer our questions, you may be supposed to have reserved yourself for the creation of a grand effect; and we have to beg of the gentlemen of the jury that

they will be on their guard. If you are innocent, why did you not say so before ? ”

“ Zounds ! ” exclaimed Langlade, “ because I thought I was guilty ! ”

“ You believed yourself guilty ! ” said the Judge, astonished.

The Prisoner.—“ Yes, I killed a man, but I did not kill your Maurice Vidal.”

The Court.—“ What was the name of the man you killed ? ”

The Prisoner.—“ I do not know what it is, but it was not Maurice Vidal.”

The Court.—“ What makes you think so ? ”

The Prisoner.—“ Everything which that gentleman (pointing to the Crown Advocate) has said. He spoke for an hour of the blood which welled out of the victim’s wound, of the dagger with which he was struck, of a study, of a bedroom, in short, of a whole heap of things which cannot be true, because it was with my fist—yes, with this fist here—that I knocked the man down, and I did it under the gate of a court-yard, and not in a study.”

The Court.—“We must call the attention of the jury to the improbability of this tale.”

The Prisoner.—“The improbability ! What interest have I in saying that I killed this man rather than that ? I shall be condemned none the less !”

The Court.—“That is true, but you hope to postpone the hour of your condemnation.”

The Prisoner.—“If I had wished to postpone the hour of my condemnation, I should have spoken at first. I saw very well that you were on the wrong scent.”

Without condescending to notice the disrespect contained in the expressions made use of by Langlade, the Judge asked him why he was so tardy in his defence.

“That’s my secret,” said Langlade, casting a stealthy look of hate on Soleil-Couchant.

The Court.—“Was it in the Rue de la Paix that you killed the man you mention ?”

The Prisoner.—“Yes, it was in the Rue de la Paix, but I do not know the number.”

The Court.—“At what o’clock was it ?”

The Prisoner.—“It must have been about ten at night.”

The Court.—“And that was in October?”

The Prisoner.—“The end of October.”

“Then,” said the Judge, “you have just pronounced your own doom. No other man but Maurice Vidal was assassinated in the Rue de la Paix in October, or even in September or November.”

At this juncture, a member of the jury rose and asked the Judge whether he might make an observation.

“Speak, sir,” was the reply, “we are all attention.”

“It is my duty,” said the juryman “to call attention to a circumstance which has just struck me, and of which the Court is in ignorance. In the month of October last, a few days before the assassination in the Rue de la Paix, a friend of mine was found dead under the gateway of a court-yard. He bore upon him no trace of any wound which could lead to a suspicion of foul play, and it was

supposed that, as he was of an exceptionally sanguine habit of body, he had been seized with a fit of apoplexy. I ought to add that a large black mark was noticed on his left temple. I was the first to entertain and express the idea that my friend, in falling, had come in contact with the pavement. I can now see that the prisoner's formidable fist could, by a blow on the temple, have produced the mark I have alluded to, and so have been the cause of death."

These words, uttered by an apparently respectable man, whose position as a jurymen gave him, at the time, considerable weight, produced a great effect upon the audience.

Everybody turned to converse with his neighbour.

The Crown-Advocate handed a note to the Bench.

Several jurymen asked for further information from their colleague who had just spoken.

Langlade, never losing sight of Soleil-Couchant, conversed with his counsel.

The trial, without having been formally adjourned, was interrupted.

By degrees, order was restored, and the Crown-Advocate addressed the Court as follows—

“My, lords, on account of the new light thrown upon this case, and in deference to the opinion to which a member of the jury has unconsciously given utterance with regard to the trial on hand, I beg to apply for a postponement of the case until the next Assizes.”

The judges retired to deliberate.

On their return, after a very short absence, the presiding Judge made the following announcement—

“The Court, after mature consideration, and in accordance with the application of the Crown-Advocate, postpones the trial until the next Assizes. Gendarmes, remove the prisoner.”

The audience rose, and every one went away in a state of the greatest excitement.



## CHAPTER XIX.

ON the morning following this scene, Vibert presented himself at about ten o'clock in the Rue de Grammont. On this occasion, however, instead of taking every precaution to pass unnoticed by the people of the house, he purposely attracted the attention of the porter, and slowly went up the main staircase.

His countenance was careworn and deadly pale, and his whole appearance was that of a man weighed down by some profound grief. In three months he had aged several years. But there were in his face traces of some new feeling. His mouth, as a rule so serious, surprised itself in a smile, his look had more animation in it than it was wont to have, and altogether he had somewhat about him which was at once sad, malevolent, and self-satisfied. He appeared to be still suffering, but to be

drawing nigh to the end of his pain. His horizon, although still overcast by clouds, gave an earnest of less uncertain weather. He was hurrying, perhaps, on to an abyss, but an abyss which he saw and was approaching by a smooth and familiar road.

He might be compared to a soldier who after a long course of fighting in ambuscade, at length comes into action in the open and with the clear sky only above him. He sees a lengthy line of enemies drawn up in front of him, he knows he may fall under their fire, but for a moment he will enjoy the fierce pleasure of beholding the foe, of rushing upon him, and striking a mortal blow before he in turn has to succumb.

On reaching the floor where Julia resided, Vibert rang without any hesitation.

"I wish to see your mistress," said he to Marietta, who looked at him in astonishment.

"If you will walk into the drawing-room, sir, I will inform my mistress, who is not yet dressed."

When fairly in the room where he had not



set foot for so long, and of which he had only caught an occasional glimpse through the glazed door, a feeling of tenderness came over him.

Every spot, each object, recalled some reminiscence. In the recess of that window she had one day pressed his hands in her own as she exclaimed—"You will be devoted to me, will you not? You will aid me to avenge him?"

Near that door, on another occasion, still unheeding that under the garb of a police agent there stood a man, and that such familiarity might be dangerous, she had, in one of her moments of despair when appearances were set at nought, leaned her head on Vibert's shoulder and wept against his heart. Here she had smiled on him; there she had thanked him for good advice. Before that fire-place one evening when, completely absorbed in thought, she had not heard him come in, he had caught sight of a shapely foot resting on the fender, and the graceful outline of a rounded ankle.

Yes, in this room his love had grown, little by little, and had become an invincible and terrible passion.

If Julia had entered at that moment Vibert, still under the influence of the memories thus called up, might possibly have renounced the plans he had cherished since the previous evening, and which now caused him to smile so bitterly. But his eye fell unwittingly on the sofa where Madame Vidal used to sit with Savari by her side. The last scene he had witnessed, that scene which nearly cost him reason, recalled him to his purpose.

He forgot the good so that he might remember but the evil, and he vowed to be merciless towards others as they had been towards him.

Madame Vidal made her appearance, and, without asking Vibert to take a seat, said to him—

“I did not expect to see you any more.”

This icy reception did not astonish the detective; he was too intelligent not to have expected it. He understood perfectly that

Julia ought to hate him for having formerly dared to suspect of a crime the man whom now she loved. She had entertained these suspicions simultaneously with Vibert—had shared them with him. But that was only an additional reason for detesting, still more thoroughly, the accomplice whom she now disowned with a burning blush of shame.

“Madame,” replied Vibert drily, “I suddenly ceased to see you because my mission with you was at an end. Chance enabled me to discover the murderer of your husband; I succeeded in capturing him and handing him over to the authorities unaided, and your assistance, which was so valuable and so necessary to me so long as M. Savari was concerned, became useless.”

Every one of these words, on which Vibert laid intentional emphasis, wounded Julia to the quick, and she replied tartly—

“Well, then if my assistance is no longer of use, why—”

“Why,” said he, completing the sentence, “have I the temerity to present myself here to—

day? The answer is simple, and you may learn it if you will still permit me, Madame, to sit down for a moment."

She made no reply, but, appreciating the lesson thus given her, she took a seat, so that Vibert might follow her example.

"You were present at the trial yesterday?" asked Vibert brusquely, and determined to open the engagement.

"A portion of it," replied Julia. "The Judge gave me permission to return home at the conclusion of my examination."

"Then, Madame, you are not acquainted with the closing scene."

"I am ignorant of it; and if you are here to describe it you may spare yourself the trouble. I shall know the *dénouement* soon enough, more especially as it might easily be foreseen. As long as there was any question of discovering the murderer of my husband you found me strong and brave. Now that the guilty man is in custody and is about to be punished for his crime, he belongs to justice, and there

can no longer exist in my heart any feeling of hatred against him."

"Very well, Madame, I will not tell you what the end was since you think you know it. I will merely ask your permission to relate certain circumstances which came to light during the trial after you left the Court. For instance," continued Vibert, speaking still more slowly, "it was proved beyond a doubt that your husband had never set foot in the house of that creature called Soleil-Couchant."

"Ah!" said Julia, turning as white as a ghost.

This first blow struck by Vibert was a terrible one. If, a few weeks previously, any one had said to Madame Vidal: "Your husband has been the victim of an odious calumny; he was always faithful to you and did not even know the woman, whose lover he was supposed to have been," she would have experienced a feeling of unmixed joy. But now, faithlessness on the part of her husband was the sole excuse she could make to her own conscience for having given way so soon to another love, and this excuse was slipping from under her.

For a moment the thoughts which we have expressed so briefly assailed her in full force ; her mind was a prey to remorse. Soon, however, she regained somewhat of her calmness, and, turning towards Vibert, asked—

“How came justice at last by this more complete information? What other motive than jealousy could have induced Langlade to kill my husband?”

“It was not he who killed him!” replied Vibert.

“Not he! What do you mean? Did he not confess his crime?”

“Yes; but it was a case of mistaken identity. He had killed a man whose name he did not know, and he imagined it was your husband. Here, Madame, have the kindness to read the *Gazette des Tribunaux*. You will there see the end of this remarkable trial, at which you did not think proper to be present.”

With trembling hands Julia took the paper which Vibert held out to her. She was far from divining the end which the detective had in view, but she felt instinctively that she was menaced by a serious danger.

After having finished the perusal, she gave herself up to reflection, and the paper slipped from her hands.

Vibert picked it up, folded it with care, put it in his pocket, and said—

“So you see we have to begin again.”

Julia raised her head quickly.

“To begin what again?” she asked.

“The murderer is not yet discovered, and still a murderer there must be. We must recommence the search.”

“That is a matter for justice to deal with,” said she curtly. “I have nothing whatever to do with it.”

“You are soon discouraged, Madame,” remarked Vibert.

She looked at him haughtily, and, letting her feelings get the better of her, replied—

“Spare me your remarks, sir, I beg.”

“*Mon Dieu!* Madame,” he continued, “if I deplore the discouragement which seems to have taken possession of you, it is because I see my own particular interests endangered.”

“What do you mean by that?”

"I expected undoubtedly that you would assist me, as formerly, in my search. I was clumsy enough, I admit, to be led astray on a false scent ; but I come back to my first idea, which assuredly, was a good one."

"Your first !" and as she said it the colour fled from her cheeks, for his meaning began to dawn upon her.

"Yes, Madame, my first ; seeing that Langlade is not the culprit, I have every reason to suspect Savari, as I did from the first."

"Sir !"

"Madame !"

"Your suspicions can never reach him of whom you speak."

"They reached him tolerably well formerly," was the cruel reply. "In what respect, may I ask, has the situation changed ?"

"It is changed," she exclaimed indignantly, "he is a good man, I have learned to know him, to esteem him. Pollute him no longer with your suspicions !"

"Madame," said Vibert, by this time thoroughly exasperated at seeing her defend



Savari with so much energy, and casting aside all reserve, "since I entered this room you have been pleased to recall to my mind that I am not a man, but simply a police agent. Very well! a police agent only recognizes his duty; he is told to seek after a criminal, and he sets about his task without paying any attention to the interest which a woman takes in that criminal, or to the love which she bears him."

She bounded from her seat, stretched out her arms, and gave utterance to but one word—

"Go!"

Not a whit less pale than she was, and wounded equally to the quick, Vibert cast down his eyes and obeyed.

When he reached the door, she thought herself rid of him, and, sinking in an arm-chair, she exclaimed—

"Whither have I been brought? What country is this where even at home a man can be assassinated and a woman insulted?"

She was sublime in her indignation. Her luxuriant black hair which, in her haste to see the detective, she had scarcely given herself

time to coil round her shapely head, came undone, and fell over her quivering shoulders.

Her bosom heaved under the lace which scarce covered it. Anger lent warmth to her cheeks and colour to her lips, and her open mouth, from which a sigh escaped, revealed her perfect teeth.

Vibert, who had stopped, lost in contemplation of her, had never seen her so lovely. He could no longer restrain his imagination; wrought up to a pitch of excitement and yet unsatiated, in a moment he lost his head, sprang towards Julia, took her face between his hands to prevent her avoiding him, and imprinted a burning kiss on her lips.

It was perhaps the first kiss he had ever given a woman. She shuddered at the odious touch, and then wrenching herself free from his embrace by a sudden struggle, she struck Vibert in the face, and rushed from the room in a state of distraction.



## CHAPTER XX.

OF all the numerous documents which were placed in our hands and enabled us to recount this history, there now remain but a few short notes, destitute of all details. We have reached the fifth act of our drama. The time of compulsory delay has gone by, the action of the piece carries us forward, and the facts are hurrying onward to their *dénouement*.

This affair of the Rue de la Paix may be said to have gone hand in hand with the events of which since the 22nd February, 1848, Paris was the scene. It was, so to speak, drawn into the vortex of political agitation. In the Rue de Grammont, incident followed on incident, just as ministers succeeded ministers in the Tuileries.

In the former, a scene of unheard of violence gave place to another still more dramatic; in

the latter, Molé replaced Guizot, who in turn made way for Thiers and Odilon Barrot. The first concession brought a second in its train ; to reform succeeded the Regency, and to the Regency the Republic.

This coincidence furnishes no cause for astonishment. The great invariably draws after it the small. The agitation of the masses communicates itself to individuals, and the fever which spreads through the streets penetrates the houses also.

As soon, after Vibert's departure, as Julia had recovered from her indignation, she, on a moment's reflection, came to an energetic determination and sat down at her desk.

"Do not come and see me during the day," she wrote to Savari, "but be here at seven o'clock precisely. I have a great project to unfold to you."

She sealed the note, and summoned Marietta.

"Send this letter at once to its address, and then come to me again."

When Marietta had executed this commission, Madame Vidal said to her—

“ We leave for Italy to-morrow. Pack up and help me to dress. I am going out.”

Immediately afterwards she drove to her solicitor's office and arranged several little matters with him, went to the church of Saint-Roch, where she remained for a long time engaged in prayer, and then went on to the Cemetery of Père-la-Chaise. She knelt down on a grave, burst into tears, and seemed to be imploring pardon.

It was with considerable difficulty that she accomplished these various peregrinations. It was Wednesday, the 23rd of February, and Paris was in the full swing of open insurrection.

Whole regiments, in battle array, were drawn up on the boulevards; strong guards patrolled the streets; the artillery, brought in hot haste from Vincennes, were posted on the quays and in the environs of Portes Saint-Denis and Saint-Martin. In one place a regiment of infantry of the line fraternized with the people; in another, the National Guards endeavoured to interpose between the Municipal Guards and mutiny. *Gamins* paraded

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the streets to the cry of "*Vive la Reforme!*" workmen were planting flags on the barricades, and students sang the Marseillaise. The death cry was heard from the direction of Saint-Merri, and the rattle of musketry sounded in the barracks of Saint-Martin, at the Arts-et-Metiers, and in the Rue Bourg-l'Abbé.

And above the din of these shouts, these cries, this fusillade, came the doleful call of the tocsin.

No accident happened to Julia who traversed a great portion of Paris without inconvenience. But, unnoticed by her, a man dogged her footsteps the whole time and kept an unflagging watch over her. He even glided into her house, and made his way to the back staircase as she ascended the main one.

It was nearly seven o'clock when she re-entered her home. Marietta, uneasy, ran to meet her, and Savari made his appearance shortly afterwards.

"Well, what have you to tell me?" said he, "what is the great project you mentioned in your letter? Has the insurrection frightened you, and do you mean to fly from Paris?"

"Just so," she replied, "I do not wish to remain any longer exposed to the dangers to which one is liable here. I leave to-morrow."

"Let us go," said Savari.

"You will follow me?"

"Can you ask me such a question?" he exclaimed, kissing her hand.

She looked earnestly at him, read in his eyes all the love he felt for her, and said to him—

"Sit down there. I have something serious to say to you."

"I am all attention, dearest," said Savari, sitting down by her side on the sofa.

"I have," said she, "committed a grave fault, one still greater than I imagined it to be. I have just wept bitterly over it, but I do not wish to throw the responsibility of it upon you, and it shall no longer come between us. I trust myself entirely to your love, and I am convinced that it will undertake the task of making me forget the past."

"Yes," exclaimed Savari, "my very life belongs to you."

"I do not doubt it. What would become

of me without you? I have even lost," she added with a sigh, "all right to remember my former self."

"Do not look back, trust and hope. You speak of leaving for Italy; so much the better, it is what I wished. There, in that lovely country, under that bright sun, near you, resting on your heart, my real nature will be developed, I shall acquire those qualities of which I am now deficient, and I shall succeed in completely blotting out from my life the years I have lost, my errors and my faults."

"And I shall be proud of you!" she said with enthusiasm, for Savari by degrees had imbued her with his ardour and had made her forget the emotion of the day.

"Where shall we go?" he resumed. "To Genoa, to your family?"

"Yes, I shall indeed be happy in making you love my mother."

"And how will you introduce me? As a friend?"

"No, to all who belong to me you will be



the man whose name I shall bear as soon as I have completed my term of mourning."

"You consent!" he cried.

"Certainly," she replied simply. "You may marry me in full security," she added with a charming smile, "my family is honourable, and in my past life there is nothing with which I have to reproach myself."

"Ah!" said Savari, "would that I could say as much!"

At this moment the drawing-room was suddenly lighted up; a band of men carrying torches, passed along the Rue de Grammont, on their way to the Boulevards. They were preceded and followed by an immense crowd, singing the Marseillaise. Drums and trumpets furnished an accompaniment to the voices. Every man vied with his neighbour in celebrating the victory gained that day by the people over royalty. The reforms asked for had been granted, and a new Ministry had taken office. The barricades were being deserted, the troops were returning to barracks, circulation was gradually being re-established,

mutual congratulations were exchanged, and a general illumination was being carried into effect without an idea that an hour afterwards men would be murdering each other on the Boulevard des Capucines. Independently of the particular opinion to which each one may incline, there is nothing so generally electrifying as such songs, illuminations, and enthusiasm as reigned throughout Paris. They infuse unwonted excitement into the most tranquil natures; they give courage to the timid, and decision to the nervous.

Savari, already deeply moved by the conversation which had just taken place, was roused to a pitch of excitement when, after having watched the animated scene being enacted in the street, he resumed his place by Julia's side. He was in one of those moments when the wisest of men forget their prudence, are content to obey their passing impulses, and see life from a new standpoint. What would a second before have seemed impossible and monstrous to him, now appeared simple and natural. Strange fancies took possession

of him, and he was endued with unusual daring ; nothing was impracticable.

For a considerable time past, Savari had been meditating an important revelation to Julia. An unendurable burden was weighing him down, he was tortured by a constantly recurring thought, and his greatest enjoyments were poisoned by a piercing sorrow. It seemed to him that if he could confide his secret to somebody, if he could pour himself out, as it were, on the heart of a friend, if he could make a clean breast of it and weep, his suffering would be lessened. Above all, if Julia, in whom he had implicit confidence, would listen to his tale, and, after having heard it, could hold him guiltless, he would be saved. But though always on the eve of speaking, he had as yet held his tongue. This time he made up his mind to confession. She had been speaking to him of her life ; he ought to tell her of his. There would not be any secrets between them ; they loved each other too well. Before letting her bear his name, honour bade him reveal to her every taint there

might be upon it. Who would be indulgent if Julia were not? Who, better than she, could assuage his sorrow, console and comfort him with sweet words?"

The shouts and songs still resounded from the street, as he drew near her again, and said—

"A secret oppresses me. Would you like me to confide it to you?"

"Certainly," she replied simply.

"It is a terrible remorse, a remorse which rends my heart."

"A remorse!" repeated Julia, looking up.

"Listen," he replied in an excited tone, "if any one were to tell you suddenly that the man whom you love—he to whom you have given your life—whose name you have consented to bear—had committed an evil deed, say a crime?"

"I would not believe it," she exclaimed.

"If it were true, however; if in a moment of anger and weakness he had stabbed a man?"

She turned pale and shrank back.

“And if,” added Savari, “by an unheard of fatality, the man died from the effects of that blow?”

“Be silent, be silent,” she cried instinctively.

“No,” he replied, “I have begun and I must finish. This secret stifles me. You must either condemn or acquit me.”

Again she attempted to stop him, but he no longer listened to her. He had risen and was pacing the room with feverish and impatient strides.

“Hear me, and learn to know me. As a rule calm and self-possessed, I have moments when I am carried away by passion and have no longer any control over myself. Sometimes certain wines make me lose my head. I had dined at a restaurant on the Boulevards. I was worried and anxious, and to drown my care, I allowed myself to be persuaded to drink more than my custom was. After dinner I went to see a young man with whom I had already had some serious disputes on money matters. I owed him a large sum; I was not in a position to pay him and I wished

to let him know it. I found him alone in his house ; he had just come home and was going to bed. He received me with coldness. I explained to him my embarrassment and the difficulties I was in, and I begged him not to press me. I said to him, ' You will only ruin me and deprive me of the small amount of credit remaining to me on the Bourse, on which I am dependent for a living ! ' He replied ' that that was no business of his.' I implored him, yes I condescended to implore him to have mercy. He was deaf to all my entreaties. Then, driven to desperation, I exclaimed, ' You shall have something to answer for. Sooner than be humiliated and hunted down in this way, I'll kill you ! ' ' You ? ' he replied in a bantering tone, ' you'll kill me ' Very well. Take hold, here's a charming dagger ; I offer it to you, firmly persuaded that you will not make bad use of it.' I took the dagger mechanically, but the blood rushed to my brain, and the heavy wines which I had been drinking deprived me of my reason. I no longer implored my creditor, I complained

of his harshness and severity. 'My harshness!' he exclaimed, 'here, take your bills, I don't want to have anything more to do with you. But I shall have the right to proclaim you on all sides as a thief!' I to be called a thief! I sprang upon him, and he struck me a blow in the face. Then, mad with rage, I struck him in my turn with the dagger he had put into my hands. He uttered a cry, and fell! I hurled the dagger away from me, and fled in a state of distraction. Yes, all this happened as I have told you. I swear it!"

He stopped to take breath, and then, continuing to pace the room without looking at Julia, he went on—

"I thought I had only wounded him slightly—I had killed him! A few days afterwards I was arrested. First of all I wanted to confess everything. No jury would have convicted me of murder. I was an unfortunate, but not a guilty man. I had been the cause of death, but an unwitting one. Suddenly the recollection flashed across my mind of the bills which he had restored to me, which I had not wanted

to take, and which he had forcibly thrust into the pocket of my overcoat. They must be there, and somebody must have found them—if I confessed I was lost!—I should be nothing but a common assassin—a murderer, for the sake of the money I owed. It was then that I determined to defend myself and to devote all my intelligence towards saving my own head and putting justice off the scent. I said to myself—

“‘If my life is a burden to me, if the remembrance of my crime becomes hateful to me and renders my existence unendurable, there will always be time enough for me to kill myself; I can choose my own mode of death, and I will execute justice on myself without the necessity of laying my head on the block.’

“My innocence was believed in, my liberty restored to me, and at the very moment when in desperation I should probably have put an end to myself, I suddenly found myself clinging to life with all my might—for I had just met you, and I loved you! Speak now,” he added, going close to Julia, but without daring



to look at her, "speak ; you know my crime will you hold me guiltless?"

With her head buried in her hands, she was silent.

This silence terrified him. He put his hand on Julia's head and tried to make her look at him.

As she did so he recoiled with horror—her face was livid. Two huge tears coursed down her cheeks.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "I am, then, more guilty than I thought myself. You will not pardon me!"

She rose, as if with difficulty, and said in a voice which sounded hollow and strangely muffled—

"I am the widow of Maurice Vidal!"





## CHAPTER XXI.

SAVARI, pale, overwhelmed, and incapable of any definite idea, mechanically made his way out of the drawing-room, where Julia had left him alone.

He opened the door and went down the staircase, holding on by the bannisters, his legs seeming to give way beneath him. Having gained the street, he took the road leading to the Boulevards. He supported himself against the walls like a drunken man, and reeled at every step.

Those terrible words, "I am the widow of Maurice Vidal!" were buzzing in his ears, and he saw them before his eyes, written as if in letters of blood. Each letter seemed to him to be of enormous size and to bar his onward path.

One of them underwent a sudden transformation into a human form, and planted itself

in front of him. He thought he saw Maurice Vidal distinctly holding out his arms and motioning him to stand aloof. At the corner of the Boulevard and the Rue de Grammont he was completely dazed.

Large garlands of light gleamed from house to house, and an immense crowd was circulating in all directions. Flags were waved, allegorical transparencies were displayed, and the people laughed and sang. Universal joy was painted on every face.

He understood nothing of what was going on. Leaning against the shutters of a closed shop, he looked with a stupefied air at the surging mob around him. He was jostled and knocked about, but he never perceived it.

Suddenly a spare man, insignificant-looking and pale, seized him by the arm and said—

“Albert Savari, I arrest you, in the name of the law!”

Savari, without moving or making any sign, without even trying to shake off the hold on his arm, looked down on the speaker, recognised him, and replied sadly—

"I am in no humour now for joking."

"I am not joking," said the little pale man.

"I arrest you for the murder of Maurice Vidal."

Nothing could astonish Savari; he did not even wince, but merely said—

"Who are you, then, sir?"

"I am a detective, and am called Vibert."

"Ah! I understand," said Savari, who was by degrees recovering the use of his reason, "you are no more the Count de Rubini than she was your cousin."

"Just so. Will you come with me quietly, or shall I be obliged to use force?"

"One moment," said Savari, still unmoved. "Why do you accuse me of being the assassin of Maurice Vidal?"

"Because you have just confessed it."

"To whom?"

"To his widow."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "she has denounced me already."

No words can give any idea of the tone in which he said this. There was no accent of

reproach in it, nor even of complaint. It was the cry of a broken heart.

An ordinary detective would have been affected by it. An unfortunate rival would not be so, and Vibert did not try to undeceive Savari.

“Let us go,” said Vibert.

“Let us go,” repeated Savari, with an air of resignation.

What were the prison and the scaffold to him now!

At this moment a lengthy line of men moved along the Boulevards. Far more numerous than all the former crowds which had been flocking through Paris during the day, it was composed of students, National Guards, men in blouses, women and children. It came from the direction of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and made its tumultuous way towards the Madeleine, to the accompaniment of torches and patriotic songs, tricolour lanterns and red flags.

Vibert and Savari, too much excited to pay any attention to what was going on around

them, had not noticed the approach of this column, and they found themselves suddenly hustled, separated, and then drawn into the vortex.

Vibert, who was bent on struggling and fighting against the stream, was soon jostled to the edge of it, and found himself amongst the rearmost ranks of the mob. Savari, on the contrary, made no resistance, but remained in front and allowed himself to be impelled by the surging flood.

It was not long before this mass of the populace, reinforced by all the bands which it met on its way, arrived close to the guard stationed over the Foreign Office. The Commandant of this post ordered the guard, two hundred strong, to form *sarequ*. The mass, impelled from behind and from both sides, was unable to stop, and continued its advance. The soldiers fixed bayonets.

"This is infamous," was the universal shout, "we are betrayed."

A pistol shot, fired from some unknown

quarter, was heard. The soldiers, thinking they were attacked, came to the present, and the crowd received the volley almost at the muzzles of the guns. About sixty men fell, of whom half were killed outright. The blood ran in streams.

When the momentary stupefaction which ensued had passed away, there was a general rush to help the wounded, who were taken to the neighbouring houses and dispensaries. At the same time, a waggon, drawn by a white horse, appeared, into which the dead bodies were cast, and this funeral *cortége*, lighted up by torches, proceeded through Paris to the oft-repeated cry—

“Vengeance! vengeance! The people are being murdered!”

Savari, who was in the foremost rank of the column, was hit and wounded mortally. He was carried under a gateway in the Boulevard, and, when there, he made signs to those around him that he wished to speak. They leaned over him and caught the words—

“Carry me to the Rue de Grammont. I want to see somebody again before I die.”

Two men out of the crowd, two of those men who are ever ready with a helping hand for the unfortunate and lend a willing ear to every supplication, improvised a stretcher, laid the wounded man upon it, and set out on their journey.

A boy followed them with a torch in his hand, which shed its rays on the bleeding chest of Savari, and lighted up his handsome face, where Death had already set his icy seal. All eyes were upon them; the women wept, the men shouted, “To arms!”

It was nearly midnight; the assembly by trumpet call and beat of drum was heard in the distance, and the bells were ringing from all the churches.

The men who were carrying Savari, and the boy who followed them with the torch, made their way slowly amidst all this tumult. When they reached a certain house in the Rue de



Grammont, the wounded man rallied and signed to them to stop.

They knocked at the street door, mounted the stairs up to the third story, and rang the bell loudly.

There was no response. The rooms were deserted.

Julia, driven to distraction by the revelation she had heard, had fled with Marietta half-an-hour previously.

Savari was unwilling to be taken home, and, after an interval of agony, which was mercifully short, he breathed his last at his mistress' door, with her name on his lips.





## CHAPTER XXII.

WHILST the powerful voice of revolt was thus making itself heard in Paris, the excitement which reigned in the streets climbed the highest walls and penetrated into the prisons. The watchfulness of the warders relaxed ; they were all ears for news from without, and they feared for their own safety. The soldiers, who could have lent them aid in case of need, were recalled from their outlying posts and concentrated in barracks. The prisoners were excited, violent, ready to profit by every opportunity, to make a rush at the doors, to scale the walls, and to massacre all who should attempt to keep them under lock and key.

Without, the people were fighting for freedom generally ; within, the prisoner was ready to strike a blow for his own liberty.

On Thursday, the 24th of February, at the height of the insurrection, Langlade threw himself on a warder who was imprudent enough to enter his cell alone, stifled his cries by means of a gag, took off his own clothes and put on the warder's uniform, coat and képi, possessed himself of the bunch of keys, and walked quietly out of the main door.

Fighting was still going on in the streets, and the superintendents, warders, and assistants of all grades were too much preoccupied to take notice of this bold escape.

Langlade went headlong into the thick of the insurrection, fighting against the people and the troops by turns. It mattered little to him ; he had no political opinions. He entered the Tuileries, ransacked the throne, drank the Royal wines, and, smothered with mire and blood, half drunk, a pistol in his hand and a sword dangling at his side by a thick red cord, he betook himself to Soleil-Couchant to finish the evening.

Without losing time by ringing, he burst

open the door of his mistress with his foot, went into the sitting-room, and, hearing the sound of voices in a neighbouring apartment, crashed through another door and found himself in the room next to Soleil-Couchant's bedroom.

She was just about to retire, and her young Englishman, stretched at full length on the sofa, was smoking a cigarette.

Soleil-Couchant gave vent to a scream as soon as she saw Langlade, and, verily, she had good cause for fear. The Englishman said—

“Damn it, who are you?”

Langlade, by way of reply, took him under his arm, marched him across the passage, threw him down the stairs, and then shut and locked the door. He then went into the sitting-room again.

“What do you want with me?” said Soleil-Couchant, who had been too frightened to think of flight.

“You'll soon know,” said Langlade.

“You want to kill me,” she exclaimed.

"No, not yet. You were going to bed ; don't let me disturb you."

On the following morning, about seven o'clock, Langlade, who had not slept, opened the shutters, and the wan light of early morning penetrated into the room.

Soleil-Couchant, wearied out with the excitement of that stormy night, had just fallen asleep. Langlade entered the room, leaned over her and looked long and earnestly at her. Then he woke her.

"Oh, let me sleep." said Soleil-Couchant, rubbing her eyes.

"No," said he, "you will soon fall into a slumber deeper still."

His words roused her effectually. She sat up in bed, and cried out—

"What do you want to do to me?"

"Keep my oath, of course, and kill you."

"Mercy, mercy!" she wailed, trying to throw her arms round him.

Langlade shook her off, and said—

"There is no mercy for you."

"But you are a free man now. We can fly and live together."

"No, I wish it no longer. You do not love me."

"Oh, yes. I love you."

"Silence! You lie."

"I love you, I tell you. I swear it."

"A woman does not betray the man she loves, she does not accuse him in a court of law nor give him up to justice. Come, prepare to die."

"No—no—mercy!"

"If you believe in God, say your prayers. When the clock which your Englishman gave you strikes seven, you will have ceased to live!"

She leaped out of bed, threw herself at Langlade's feet, kissed his hands, wept and entreated. He was inflexible, and merely said—

"Remember the scene in the prison."

Seven o'clock struck. He threw the window wide open, and advanced towards Soleil-Couchant. With one hand he laid hold of both her arms to prevent her from clinging to him,

with the other he lifted her from the ground, carried her to the window, and hurled her into space.

Then he leaned out, looked at the place on the pavement where she had fallen, got on to the window-sill, and threw himself headlong down after her.

When he reached the ground, he was still alive, and there the spectators of this terrible scene saw him crawl along on his bloody hands and knees to the corpse of his mistress.

When he breathed his last sigh, he still held her fast locked in his shattered arms.

\* \* \* \* \*

There exists at Genoa, a charitable institution bearing the charming title, "Albergo dei Poveri," the Inn of the Poor. Mark well that it is called an inn, and not a hospital, which means that to gain admission it is not indispensably necessary to be either hurt or ill. To be too old, or too young, or too infirm to work suffices as a claim to find refuge in this hospitable house.

The aged are there tended until death, the

young until maturity, the infirm until skilful treatment has restored to them their lost strength. The "Albergo dei Poveri" musters more than two hundred inmates, of whom a great number are looked after by women. The sister of charity is not French alone; she belongs to every nation. At the side of suffering a woman is ever to be found.

Julia Vidal has retired into the institution of which we have been speaking, and she still resides there, remarkable for her zeal, her devotion, and her sweet disposition, to which all bear witness.

Marietta is with her, and aids her in her noble task.

\* \* \* \* \*

Five years have passed away since a certain lunatic breathed his last in the asylum presided over by Doctor Blanche. He was the richest inmate of the establishment, having inherited from the Marquis de X---, a peer of France, a legacy of a hundred thousand francs per annum.

As a rule, he was quiet and inoffensive, and



his madness only showed itself in one form, that of listening unceasingly at doors. He would be seen to glide along the corridors, crouch in a corner near a door, and either look through the key-hole or place his ear against it. In this harmless position he would remain for whole days, and the attendants grew accustomed to leave him alone.

There were, however, certain seasons in the year when his insanity assumed a more dangerous character, and then the strait waistcoat had to be brought into requisition. But this crisis was always preceded by an extraordinary symptom; the lunatic would complain that his lips were burning, and would shriek aloud for water to cool them, rubbing his fingers incessantly from one side to the other of his mouth, as if to efface the traces of a kiss.

THE END.

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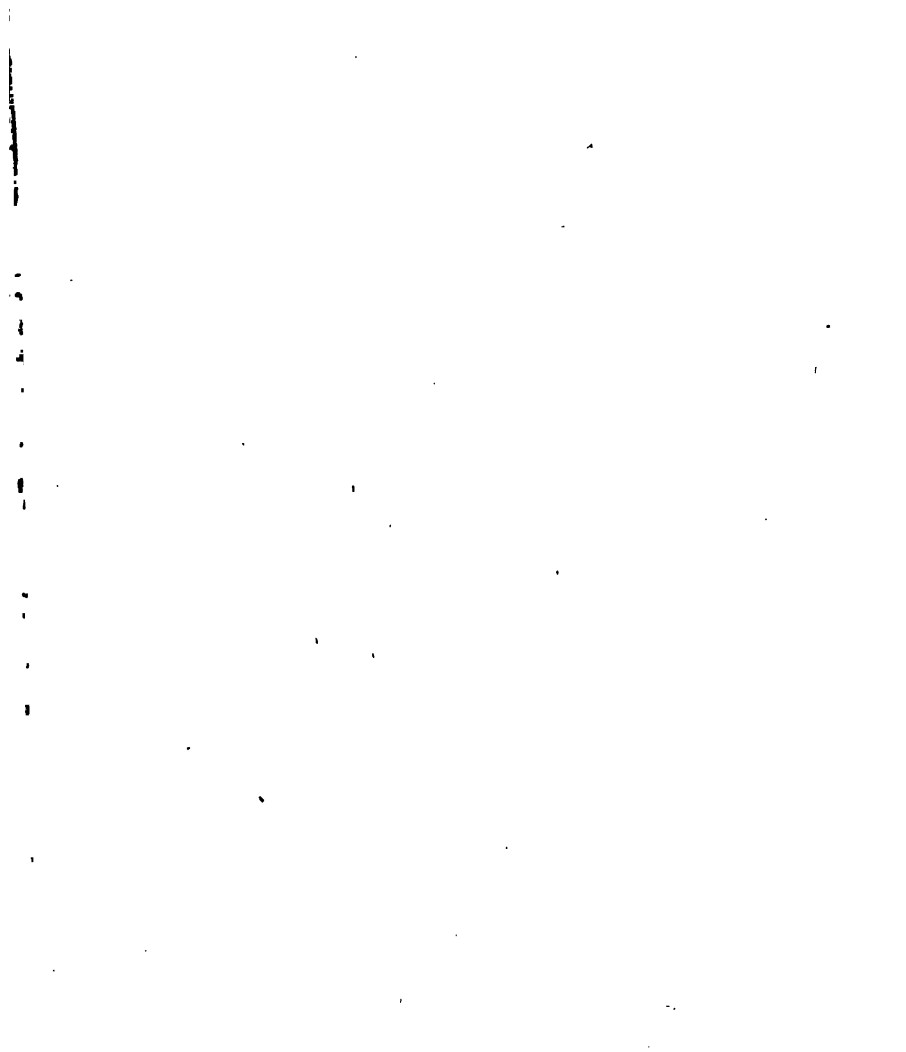
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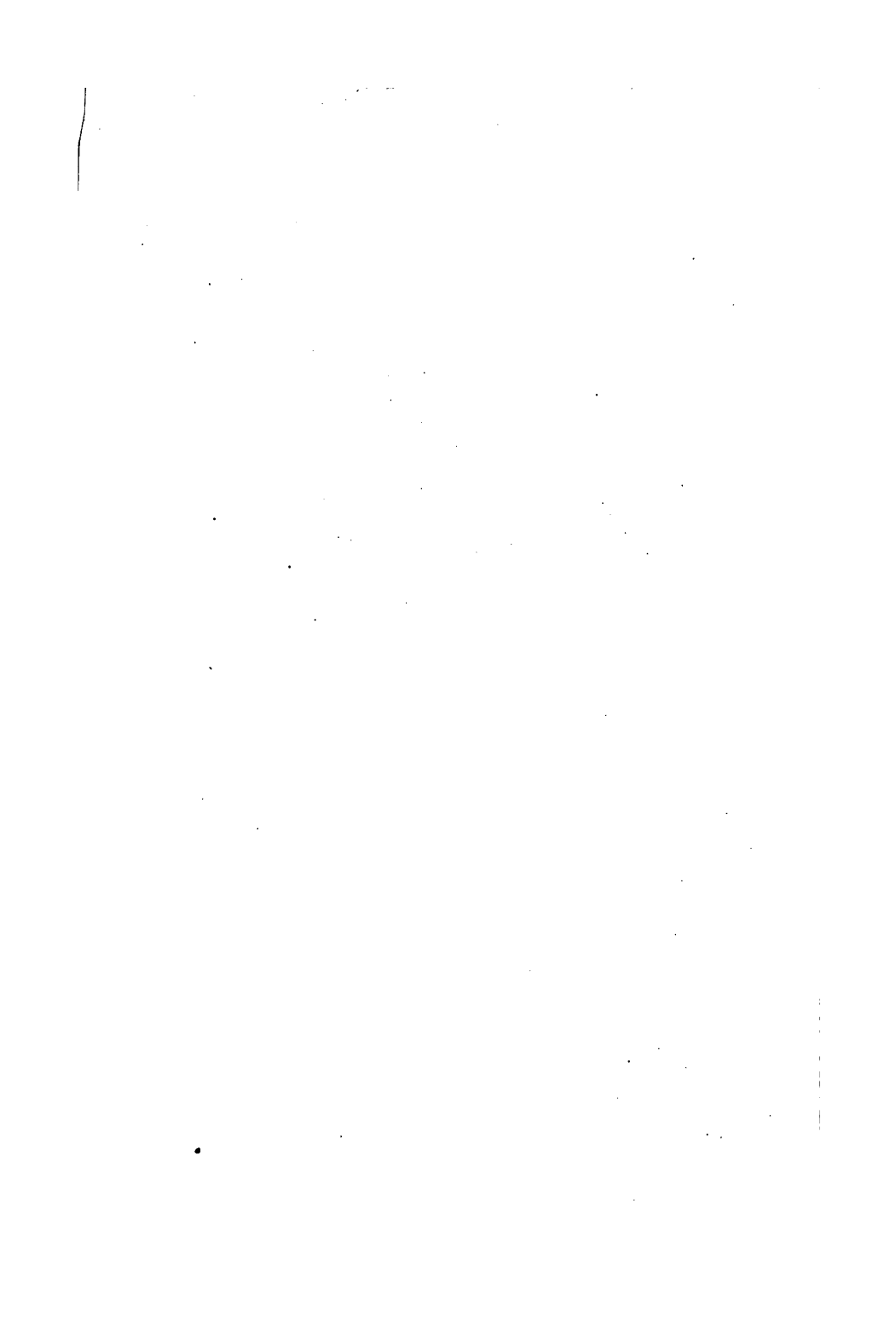
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